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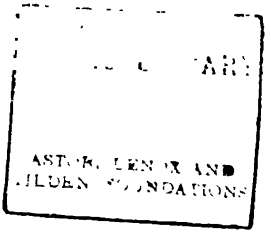
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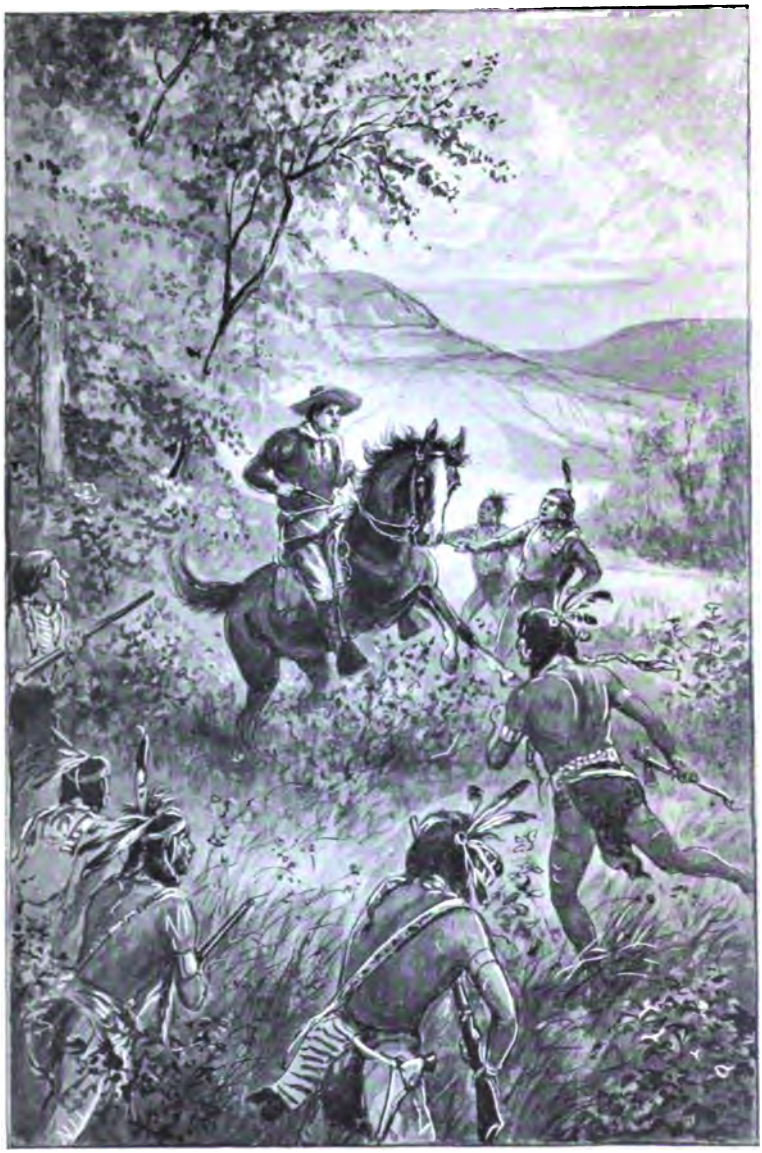

Page 138. JACK IS CAPTURED. *Frontispiece.*

THE MASTER OF THE STRONG HEARTS

A STORY OF CUSTER'S LAST RALLY

BY

ELBRIDGE S. BROOKS

Author of "Historic Boys," "The Story of the American Indian," "The Century Book of the American Revolution," "A Boy of the First Empire," "A Son of the Revolution," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY WM. M. CARY

SITTING BULL
From a Photograph

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PREFACE.

NOT since Nolan gave the word that made the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava a glorious and deathless blunder has so notable an unnecessary slaughter of gallant men found place on the records of heroism as that of Custer's last rally in the valley of the Little Big Horn.

Ambuscades have been a feature of every American war from the days of Braddock on the Monongahela to the entrapment of the Rough Riders at La Quasina; but Custer's defeat was more than an ambuscade; it was the culmination of Indian strategy and generalship designed by one who was himself no war-chief, and who proved himself neither hero nor warrior,—Sitting Bull, the medicine-chief of the Uncapapa Sioux, the crafty Master of the Strong Hearts.

It is to tell, in story-fashion, but as correctly as the sifted reports and records of both sides render possible, the real tale of Custer's last rally and heroic death, that this book has been written. Intended, primarily, for young Americans,—for those of our boys and girls who delight in adventure and wish their stories spiced with action,—the book still en-

deavors to appeal to all Americans, and to so deal with facts as to explain, in some fashion, the causes and "misfits" of that rash enterprise which closed in the tragedy of Custer and his brave troopers under the bluffs of the Little Big Horn.

There were heroes on both sides, red and white alike; while, in the character of the squaw-man, the author seeks to do justice to a misunderstood and vanishing type of border life.

For valuable assistance in the preparation of this story, the author wishes to express his thanks to those of both races who aided him with information —pale-face and Indian alike; for all, to-day, are Americans.

Thanks are especially due to Mr. O. D. Wheeler, of St. Paul, Mr. John F. Wallace of Bismarck, Miss Alice C. Fletcher, of the Bureau of Ethnology, and to two estimable Sioux women of North Dakota whose expressed request alone withholds all mention of their courtesy by name. To these, and the numerous, if sometimes conflicting, authorities in print from whom valuable suggestions were obtained, the author again expresses his indebtedness and thankful appreciation.

ELBRIDGE S. BROOKS.

BOSTON, July 4, 1898.

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THE MASTER OF THE STRONG HEARTS.

A STORY OF CUSTER'S LAST RALLY.

CHAPTER I.

JACK HAS AN ADVENTURE.

PERHAPS you think there can be no chance for adventure in a big, busy, crowded, humdrum city like New York. I mean stirring, out-of-the-way, uncitified adventures, of course.

Whether you do or not, that is precisely what Jack Huntingdon was thinking as he walked slowly along Rivington Street, on the East Side, one Saturday morning in April in the year 1875.

Jack was sixteen, and had about decided that there really was no kind of a show for an ambitious, wide-awake young fellow in New York, especially if he thought more of adventure than of arithmetic, and was very certain that he was not cut out for a clerk, a bookkeeper, or an apprentice.

Jack was a child of the war days, and the restless

blood of his soldier-father seemed sometimes to run riot in his veins. He longed to see the world. He was determined to do something and to be somebody. At all events he was debating in his mind, as he walked leisurely along Rivington Street, which would suit him best—to get some sort of a position at the big Centennial Exposition which was to be held in Philadelphia the very next year, or to try sheep-raising or cattle-ranching in Montana.

He had about decided in favor of Montana and the cattle-ranch, when he was suddenly startled from his dream of wealth and adventure by a yell, familiar to all New York boys—the shrill slogan of the street arab turned tormentor.

A half-dozen rapid steps brought him face to face with the trouble.

Braced against an over-full ash-box of the old and solid type leaned a figure that aroused in Jack Huntingdon mingled feelings of pity, surprise, and concern—a red Indian of the West in a state of collapse. The white man's fire-water and the unfamiliar surroundings of an inhospitable city had quite driven all the " Last-of-the-Mohicans " spirit from this transplanted savage, and he made but feeble and half-hearted attempts to ward off the attacks of the dancing circle of street urchins who baited him with taunt and jeer and indignity, to none of which would he respond.

The Indian's blanket had been pulled off, his eagle feathers had been plucked out, and the remnant of his costume was all awry. The tables were turned with a vengeance. The Indian was at the torture-stake; the palefaces were the tormentors—and how relentless a street boy of the East Side can be Jack Huntingdon knew from his own frequent experience at feud and foray, and the often-repeated clash of boy against boy in the old-time "war of the sections" in New York of the sixties and seventies.

Those, however, were equal fights; this was simply an unmanly advantage. It aroused Jack's instant anger, and awoke at once his chivalry and his desire to protect and aid the helpless.

The Indian certainly was helpless. Unnerved by drink and unmanned by home-sickness, the young brave—for he did not seem much older than Jack himself—was quite a different figure from the Indian warrior of Jack Huntingdon's dreams.

Jack, to be sure, had seen many an Indian exhibition on the boards of Lamartine Hall, or of the more pretentious Knickerbocker Hall of his day, when the hordes of the West, under the lead of manager and ticket-agent, invaded the quiet precincts of Eighth Avenue. But he had never seen one like this; and Jack Huntingdon had been well schooled in the Bible injunction to be hospitable to the stranger within your gates.

Heedless of the disparity of numbers, he sprang to the rescue and dashed the yelling group aside.

"What 's the matter with you fellows?" he demanded, indignantly. "Are n't you ashamed of yourselves—plaguing him like this? Can't you see he don't know what to do? Let 's have your tomahawk, Johnnie," he said, turning to the defenceless Indian, into whose eyes had come the gleam of grateful relief. "What! don't you carry a tomahawk with you?"—for he saw no such weapon in belt or hand. "What sort of an Injun are you, anyhow? Here! clear out of this, all of you, or Johnnie and I 'll just scalp the whole lot!"

This terrific threat, however, had no effect upon the group of young ruffians, who, borne back at first by Jack's unexpected onset, now returned to the fray with renewed vigor and exaggerated yells.

Jack was strong of arm and quick of fist, but the protected Indian, still dazed and stupefied, was no sort of aid, and the unequal struggle would have ended in Jack's utter defeat, had not an unlooked-for police officer, attracted by the chorus of yells, appeared on the scene.

Jack spied him at once, and, never stopping his revolving battery of fisticuffs, raised his voice in the call for help.

Club in hand the officer bore down upon the mêlée. But the assaulting force had caught the gleam of

blue and billy that marked the coming of the Law —their mortal enemy—and with loud cries of "Lay bones!" and "Cheese, the cop!" they scattered in all directions.

"What 's up?" the policeman demanded. "Who 've you got here, anyhow?"

Jack explained. The policeman inspected the red stranger critically.

"Does look like an Injun," he decided. "Should n't wonder but he 's one of that crowd that 's stopping up at the Everett House—brought on here from Out West, don't you know, to see the President. What 's he say for himself?"

"He don't say," Jack answered. "Guess he can't talk American."

"Not our American, anyhow," the police officer conceded, as a sort of amendment to Jack's statement. "Some folks do say that these Injuns are more Americans than you or I be, young fellow. Anyhow, you 're a plucky one to stand up for him so"; and he patted Jack on the shoulder.

"What do you take me for—a heathen?" demanded Jack Huntingdon. "There was n't anything else to do. I hate to see a fellow picked on, 'specially when he don't understand what you 're driving at, and is half-seas-over besides. What 'll we do with him?"

"Better get him up to the hotel, double-quick,"

the officer replied. "I don't want to run him in, and I can't leave my beat to steer him up-town. Can't you take him there?"

"I will if he can walk all right," Jack made answer. Then, turning to the young Indian, he said, "Hi! Johnnie, can you come with me? I'll get you home all right."

Jack's elaborate motions more than his words impressed the rearoused Indian, versed in the eloquence of sign-language. He understood that he had found a friend. Shaking himself out of his dispirited and demoralized condition, he touched Jack's arm with a smile, laid a hand on the boy's breast, then on his own, pointed off vaguely toward the north, and shook his head as if in uncertainty. Then, straightening up, he flung out both hands with a gesture that implied confidence, and ended his pantomime by shaking hands vigorously with Jack, at the same time giving voice to an earnest, if guttural, "How!"

All this, Jack felt, implied, on the part of the Indian boy, a willingness to follow the white boy as his guide and leader.

Evidently the police officer had the same opinion.

"That 's all right," he said; "he 'll go with you, I guess. Come! stand back, can't you?" he roared at the regathering crowd. "Ain't you got any manners, you fellows, crowdin' a poor Injun

this way? I 've got my eye on you, Swipsey Burns!" he added, singling out one whom he evidently recognized as a ringleader. "Git, now! or I 'll know why," and he swung his club threateningly.

"Say, young fellow," he motioned to Jack, "pick up the Injun and take him along. I 'll go as far as the Bowery with you. Then you get him up to the hotel the best you can. And say! just you tell his folks, or whoever has 'em in charge, to look out that they don't get wandering around, 'cause they 'll get into trouble if they do. I guess this one won't get lost again. He 's had his lesson. The East Side is n't the per-airies, is it, my gallant chief? Better stay at home and shoot buffaloes instead of trying to do New York—and New York whiskey."

Jack had some misgivings, after he parted from the policeman, as to his walk up the Bowery at midday with a blanketed, long-haired Indian. But Jack was brave enough to be able to face vulgar curiosity and open ridicule, if need be, when it came to a matter of right or duty, and a boy who can do that manfully and unflinchingly is a good deal of a hero.

That is just what he did in this case. The Indian stalked at his heels or walked at his side, stolid and speechless. And at last, greatly relieved and fol-

lowed by a constantly growing trail of small boys, big boys, and curiosity seekers, Jack guided his charge into Union Square, and led him in through the brown-pillared entrance of the Everett House.

"Any Injuns stopping here?" he demanded of the surprised clerk as he piloted his red companion to the desk. "'Cause, if there are, I 've got one of 'em that 's lost himself."

"That 's the chap we missed—Young Wolf, I think they call him," the clerk replied. "Here! front,"—he touched the call-bell—"take this man up to Injuns' rooms. You 'd better go with him, young fellow, and see the thing through."

Jack thought so, too. This was too uncommon an adventure to drop before the end. His curiosity, as well as his interest, was aroused, and he followed the bell-boy and the Indian up the stairs.

In a suite on the third floor he came upon what he called "the whole Indian encampment"—some half-dozen chiefs with their escort of agents and interpreters.

One of the chiefs strode out from the group, and grasping Young Wolf's shoulder, propounded some deep, brief, and guttural inquiry.

Jack looked at the questioner closely. He was a tall, powerfully built Indian, his color a light red, his hair brown and long, parted in the middle like a woman's, and crowned by an eagle's plume. Broad of

shoulder and strong of face, his single eagle feather almost swept the chandelier in the centre of the room, and he looked withal so big, so powerful, and so commanding that Jack weakened just a bit in his cattle-ranching decision, and decided that he would rather meet the "big Injun" in a hotel parlor in New York than on one of the buttes or in one of the cañons of the distant West.

Young Wolf replied briefly but energetically to the chief's inquiry, pointing repeatedly, as he talked, toward Jack.

The big chief walked deliberately to the boy and extended his hand.

"How!" he said. "White boy—heap good," and shook Jack's hand vigorously.

Then the other Indians, following suit, gave the boy the same hand-shake and word of commendation, while the big chief, turning to the interpreter, made a long harangue.

The half-breed interpreter for the nation's guests placed himself at Jack's elbow.

"The chief thanks you, boy," he said, evidently translating the Indian's words. "Young Wolf slipped away from us as we walked in the little plain yonder"—he pointed at the open area of Union Square,—"and lost himself. Too much fire-water and bad white men set his mind to sleep. Young Wolf is a brave, but the white man's fire-water and

big village make a brave a woman. Young Wolf might have gone to his death but for you. You are a young brave. The chief thanks you. He will tell the Great Father in Washington about you, and ask him to make you an agent among our people."

Jack walked up to the big chief as deliberately as the Indian had addressed him, shook hands vigorously, and said, "How! how!" just as emphatically as his new friends.

The chief's grave face broke into a smile; he patted the boy good-naturedly on the shoulder.

"Heap good," he said, and again branched out in a harangue to the interpreter, in which the others joined with words of evident comment or acceptance, even Young Wolf himself shaking himself from his semi-stupor to take part.

Then the interpreter again translated.

"The chief likes you, boy," he said to Jack. "He says the land of the plains and the rivers, the land we call Pah-sap-pa—the hills that are black—should be the home of such a wise young brave; he says these walls of your big village will stop your strong heart from growing; he asks the braves if they would not make you a brother of the eagle or the elk. They say, 'Yes.' Young Wolf says, 'Yes; the white boy shall be my blood-brother.' The chief says, 'Let my young brother come to our lodges; we will adopt him into our tribe.'"

"Well! here 's a chance," thought Jack. "Why, this is lots better than cattle-ranching. Be a brother of the eagle or the elk, eh? Adopted into the tribe?"

"I 'd like to, first-rate," he said aloud, replying to the interpreter. "Tell the chief I 'm awfully obliged to him, but I 'm afraid I can't leave home yet a while. How can I be Young Wolf's blood-brother? What is it? Who are your tribe—and who 's the big chief?"

"Who? Why, do you not know?" the interpreter replied. "He is Mock-peah-lu-tah—or, as the white men call him, Red Cloud, the great chief of the Ogallalas."

Red Cloud? Even Jack had heard the name of the most famous Indian of that day—Red Cloud, chief of the Ogallala Sioux, who, shrewdly seeing the growing power of the white man in the West, had come to Washington with a delegation of chiefs of the Teton tribes to try to sell the Black Hills mining country to the United States Government.

And so this was Red Cloud himself, was it? And he proposed to adopt Jack Huntingdon as a son of the Ogallalas? "What fun!" Jack said to himself.

"Tell the chief—tell Red Cloud I thank him," Jack began again. "I 'm afraid I can't get out to his country just yet. But some day I mean to,

and then I 'll hunt him up. Where shall I find him ?"

Again the interpreter turned to Red Cloud and gave him the boy's inquiry. The answer came speedily.

" The chief bids the boy ask any one beyond the great river where his lodges lie," the interpreter replied, translating. " The plains that stretch away to the feet of Pah-sap-pa are the hunting-grounds of the Ogallalas, and all men know Red Cloud. But there are bad men everywhere—red as well as white. Let the boy keep this token of the eagle feather to the head of Red Cloud "—here the interpreter handed to Jack the single feather drawn from the head of the great chief. " It is Red Cloud's gift, and when men see it in the hills they will guide the boy without harm or hurt to the lodges of the chief, and he shall eat the ash-cake and the corn dumplings beside the lodge-fires of Red Cloud the Ogallala."

Jack received the chief's token joyfully, and proudly stuck the feather in his hat-band, to the great amusement of the friendly Indians. Then, shaking hands once more with Red Cloud and Young Wolf and all the other chiefs, Jack left the hotel and walked home in high spirits, assuring himself that even in humdrum New York a boy might find adventures if he only went about it rightly—and mighty good ones, too.

He would keep the feather always, he promised himself. It was a fine memento even if he never could hope to see the great chief again, even if he never did become a ranchman.

So his home-coming, you may be sure, was full of interest, as he expatiated on his adventures and told the story of how, in the rooms of a New York hotel, he had met the mighty Red Cloud, chief of the Ogallalas, the leader of two thousand warriors of the warlike Sioux.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE SLOPE OF INYAN KARA.

IT is odd how things come about. Within three months from the day of Jack Huntingdon's Indian adventure in New York the tables were turned once more, and the New York boy was having adventures in the Indian country.

A convenient uncle, whom Jack had known only as a fixed assistant in the Assay Office, was suddenly attached to the Government expedition sent to the Black Hills of Dakota and Wyoming, for the purpose of testing the gold-producing possibilities of that almost unknown and inaccessible mountain region.

And with the expedition, as the companion of his uncle, had gone Jack Huntingdon.

For days Uncle Jerry had kept a watchful eye on Jack. But the boy soon showed his ability to take care of himself; for, despite his faculty for getting into semi-occasional scrapes, he was a level-headed youth, with an equal facility for getting out of them. He displayed a uniform amount of pluck and common sense, and Uncle Jerry gradually allowed him

larger liberty and the unrestricted use of a wiry and tireless Indian pony.

"You 'll turn up missing some day, I suppose, young man," Uncle Jerry had said, "but where 's the use in trying to make a man of you if you are n't allowed to help on the good work by a bit of experience? Only, do take care of yourself, Jack. Don't stray too far from camp, and be sure to report to me in person, always, before sundown."

Jack promised readily, and as dutifully performed. But the best-laid plans sometimes go wrong, and so it came to pass that one gorgeous summer day Jack Huntingdon, as his uncle prophesied, really did "turn up missing."

For when, at sundown, Corporal Thompson rode into the camp of the explorers, beneath the cottonwoods on the Spearfish, and inquired for Jack, no Jack was apparent.

"That 's mighty strange," said the corporal. "Why, he and Injun Joe started off after a bighorn they spotted at noon, and promised to come around by the way of Bear Gulch and get into camp before me. I reckon the critter give 'em a long chase, and they 've camped down for the night in the hills. They 'll show up in the morning, P'fessor, don't you worry. Jack 's the lad that can take care of himself!"

That was exactly what Jack was trying to do,

even while the corporal was asserting his ability. But he had begun to think that, under certain conditions, he was not altogether a success in the caretaking art. For, in the exciting hunt after that monster sheep of the Rockies, known as the bighorn, he and the guide, Injun Joe, had somehow got separated. And as the sun began to drop, round-orbed but retiring, towards the crest of the Bear Lodge range, Jack sat his panting pony, anxious and puzzled, with no definite idea as to his bearings, and a very indefinite idea as to his next move. Jack Huntingdon was hopelessly lost on the slope of Inyan Kara.

But hope revives in a boy's breast almost as quickly as it fails. It was so with Jack Huntingdon; and he gave a relieved and gratified shout as, halting his pony upon the summit of a mound that grew like a wart on the breast of Inyan Kara, he saw off to the northwest the far-away figure of a solitary horseman.

"That 's Joe," he said. "Good for him! I thought he 'd find me. These Injuns are great trackers. I 'm mighty glad he 's shown up. It 's no joke getting lost in this country. There 's too much country for comfort when you don't know the lay of the land."

There was, indeed, as Jack declared, a good deal of country spread over the earth out there in the

heart of the Wyoming mountains. But it was grand; and as Jack sat his pony awaiting Joe's approach, he felt all the beauty and the terror of that remarkable land which white men were just beginning to know and had not yet begun to appreciate.

The setting sun tinged with vivid tints of blue and green the broken and fantastic line of hills that lift themselves out of the Spearfish Valley. To the east the vast, many-colored stretch of pasture-land, glorious with flowers and waving grass, lay pulsing and undulating like a mighty sea; to the west the blood-red sun, swinging in a sky of burnished copper, threw into flame and glory all the ragged hill-line and up-jutting peaks of the Bear Lodge mountains; while over the boy's head, springing from the middle of its crater-like base, rose sheer and sharp for full six hundred feet above the crater's rim the strange, uncanny, fire-formed pillar of Inyan Kara, gorgeous in the sun's rays, as if it were a tower of topaz set with rough and sparkling jewels.

Inyan Kara, so Joe had told him, was the name of the wonderful, burnt-out block of basalt; "the mountain within a mountain," it means; and he had furthermore told the boy that here was the Indians' "sacred ground," which even they only rarely visited to cut lodge-poles in its pine woods, or to which their medicine-man came alone and stealthily to talk with the goblin dwellers of its grim

recesses, or make medicine for the welfare and fortune of the tribe.

Even in the midst of all the color and glory of that sunset scene Jack recalled "Injun Joe's yarns," and confessed to himself that it was a "spooky" place.

"I 'm mighty glad Joe 's found me," he said. "I 'd hate to spend a night here all by my lonesome. Hullo, Joe! Hurry up! Hurry up!" and he swung his arms above his head to attract the attention and accelerate the speed of the fast-approaching horseman.

But the uplifted arm dropped nerveless at the boy's side; his cheery shout died away; the glad smile of welcome faded from his face. For, as the approaching horseman, lost for a while behind a swelling hillock, crested it and appeared at last in full and recognizable view, Jack Huntingdon felt confidence ooze away and alarm take the place of hope.

The rider was not Joe at all. He was a stranger and an Indian.

There were stranger things than Indians to be seen in this wonder-filled land. Jack had studied the red man of the agency and the trading-post in all degrees of laziness and dirt; he had met him on march and trail; he had seen him in tepee and wicky-up. But there the white boy had supporters and

backers in his investigation. That was quite different from coming, suddenly and alone, face to face with one in the heart of a solitude.

Then, too, when one is thoroughly surprised it is natural, especially for a boy, to lose confidence. Jack was looking for Joe and found a stranger. The surprise was so startling that his first thought instinctively was of flight. A solitary Indian might mean an unfriendly one, and though Jack Huntingdon was no coward, he had early learned that discretion is often the better part of valor. Only it is not always easy to decide on the instant what discretion is.

In this case it seemed to Jack Huntingdon to mean distance—and as much of that as possible. So, without a second of hesitation, he dug his heels against his pony's side and galloped headlong down from the hillock on which he had been watching for Injun Joe from the southerly slope of Inyan Kara.

As he did so a shout came from the Indian, twice and thrice repeated. Then Jack knew that he was pursued. But he only pressed his pony the faster, and as he rounded the hillock and looked off toward the west for safe harbor, his heart gave a bound.

"Why! there 's the place to go for," he said. "Where were my eyes? Why did n't I see that before?"

Off to the west—he knew not how far away, but

it seemed near enough—rose the walls and columns, the domes and towers of a splendid city.

Bathed in the wonderful sunset of a cloudless Wyoming day, its walls rose in variegated colors, now gold, now purple, now yellowish drab, or now a flickering opal; while lifted high in air, above wall and turret and house-top, rose a mighty tower of gleaming yellow and green with strangely shifting tints, from the top of which, Jack found himself imagining, one might see all the kingdoms of the world and the glories of them.

There was his refuge, surely. In his state of mind he did not stop to reason or think over this strange apparition of a mountain city. It was his city of refuge from a relentless and pursuing foe.

"Where were my eyes? Why did n't I see that before?" he repeatedly asked himself, as he pushed his pony straight for the towered town where it rose almost out of the beautiful rainbow-hued river that flowed at its feet.

"Joe never told me that there was a city so near," he said. "I thought this country was uninhabited. I hope they 're white, anyhow. Shoo! shoo! Brutus. Now! stretch for it—spring for it, pony! We 'll get there before that yelling redskin does."

The redskin indeed was yelling, and to Jack's overtaxed nerves the yell was a whole concentrated war-whoop of defiance and rage.

"No, sir! You don't get me, if I know it," Jack shouted back; and with lowered head and clinging knees urged his pony all the harder toward the gold-hued, purple-towered city of the West.

But Brutus had been hard put to it that day. Even a wiry, tireless Indian pony feels that there may be a limit to equine endurance, and he began to resent Jack's double-distilled circus work.

So Jack began to find it hard to keep Brutus up to the mark. The pony gave indications of going sulky and dropping his swiftest gait. A look now and then backward over his shoulder showed Jack that his pursuer was gaining. He was getting nearer and nearer; but so, too, was the city, Jack assured himself, with ready optimism.

But alas for the clear but deceptive Wyoming atmosphere! Jack had not reckoned upon that. He had not yet grown accustomed to it, and he measured distances by Eastern standards, rather than by those of the crystal, rarefied air of the great West.

The towered city that was to be his refuge was ever still beyond; the sunset tints changed from glory to grayness and died into gloom upon tower and turret, roof and dome. And then, with a sudden heart-breaking start the whole horrible truth flashed upon Jack Huntingdon.

The stories he had heard of crystal columns, massive walls, and jewel-studded towers made by

nature's magic and the sunlight's tints from the dark, jagged, and pitiless basalt rocks and lava cliffs came surging into his brain. This was no city at all toward which he was riding for his life. It was but a lying vision of that land of mystery and magic—just rock and earth, piled and tortured into fantastic and marvellous shapes and outlines by some mighty upheaval of the long ago, gilded into a false glory and temptation by the vanishing sunlight. It was no city of refuge at all; it was simply the ragged, jagged edges of a ridge of rock. Jack Huntingdon, like others before and since, had been cruelly deceived—or had deceived himself.

Then, as the horrible truth came full upon him with the fading light, and as the glorified city changed to a deadly wall of insurmountable rock topped by that terrible tower, Brutus, always sure-footed, failed him this once, and, stumbling into a broken bit of rolling ground and loose stone, broke in the knee and threw his rider over his head.

Half stunned with the shock, Jack rolled over into a silent heap, while, with a shout that seemed a death-knell, the pursuing Indian charged full upon the prostrate and scarce semi-conscious boy.

CHAPTER III.

HOW JACK HUNTINGDON GOT A NEW NAME.

BEWILDERED and dazed, Jack came slowly to himself. But as his senses returned, fear came with them, and he would have sprung to his feet and again fled for his life. But a restraining hand held him down, and his startled eyes looked full in the face of his savage captor.

The Indian was kneeling beside the boy, one hand upon his breast, while the other held the lariats of both the ponies gathered within his grasp.

But the eyes that met Jack's did not flash with the fierce exultation of victory nor burn with the malignant gleam of hate. There was in them no indication that their owner was a merciless and barbaric foeman. Instead, the glittering eyes were kind and friendly, and, as they met Jack's, lighted up almost with the gleam of recognition or a suggestion of old acquaintanceship. The neighborliness of the look pierced even Jack's state of semi-stupefaction, as he found himself wondering where under the sun he had seen that fine bronze face before.

The smile of recognition travelled from eye to lip;

the free hand helped Jack to his feet; then, lightly touching first his own and then the white boy's breast with his brown fingers, the young Indian said:

"How!"

And Jack replied as peacefully, "How!"—the friendly salutation between the red man and the white, abbreviated from our every-day "How d' ye do?"

"White boy heap scared," the young Indian went on. "Run like coyote. Don't know me—Young Wolf?"

Like a flash there came back to Jack Huntingdon that April adventure on the East Side: the narrow, noisome, New York street, the yelling pack of tormenting urchins, the Indian at bay, the onset of the Law, the walk up the Bowery! And this was Young Wolf! With an almost hysterical laugh of relief—and what a relief it was!—he flung out both hands in greeting.

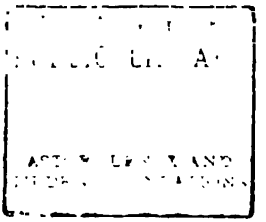
"Why, yes, I remember you," he said. "I saw you in New York. Why under the sun did n't you say who you were without running me down like a bighorn?"

Young Wolf laughed heartily—for Indians can laugh heartily.

"Boy scared before hurt," he said. "Young Wolf try to tell; boy run like wind. What here for?"

Young Wolf was evidently quite in love with

JACK AND YOUNG WOLF. *Page 24.*



himself for his proficiency in English. To Jack it was a welcome surprise.

"Why, where did you pick up so much English, Young Wolf?" he asked. "You talk like a white man. You could n't talk at all in New York. Who taught you?"

Young Wolf beamed his acknowledgment. Evidently to him, as to that English student of an earlier day, "praise from Sir Hubert Stanley was praise indeed!"

"Young Wolf learn in white boy's land," he explained, "and from Po-to-sha-sha."

"Poto—which-which? Who 's he?" queried Jack.

"Po-to-sha-sha—Red Top—squaw-man in tepee," the Indian explained, laughing; from which Jack, drawing upon his lately acquired knowledge of Indian life and ways, concluded that Young Wolf's teacher in English had been a red-haired white man, living, as such outcasts of civilization often did, because of their marriage to Indian wives, in the lodges of the red men, and that the young Indian's slight knowledge of "white man's talk" gathered in his trip through the cities of the East had thus been supplemented until he had become, for an Indian, quite an expert.

But Young Wolf was as curious as Jack, and he repeated his query.

"What here for?" he asked.

"Oh, I came with the expedition from Washington—where the President lives, you know—to see whether there is any gold in the Black Hills," Jack explained.

"You get gold from Pah-sap-pa—Black Hills you call it?—you, boy?" Young Wolf demanded.

"Well, not me, perhaps; the miners, I mean," Jack replied. "But say! can't I get back to our camp? I must—ah!"

The exclamation was wrung from him involuntarily. Then for the first time he discovered what surprise and excitement had up to that moment kept in the background, that when he went flying over Brutus's head and landed in a heap, he had given his foot an ugly twist and had, apparently, sprained his ankle.

His Indian friend understood the situation at once.

"White boy hurt foot?" he said. "Can't walk?"

Jack tried it.

"Jingoes! I don't believe I can," he replied with a wince. "Well! here 's a nice state of things. How am I going to get back to camp?"

Young Wolf was on the ground examining the ankle.

"Where camp?" he queried.

"Blest if I know!" Jack answered, laughing confusedly, in spite of his pain. "I don't know where I belong, Young Wolf. First my guide lost me, and then I lost myself. I don't know where our camp is, or how to get to it. I 'm all turned 'round. It 's somewhere in the Spearfish Valley—that 's all I know."

"That long way," Young Wolf said, waving his hand indefinitely toward the east. "White boy no good; bad foot go limp-limp—fall down. No walk; no ride. Sun gone; all night soon. Come with Young Wolf. Tepee near; Red Top there. We cure white boy's foot; then go find white man's tepee."

There seemed no other way, and Jack's ankle was swelling painfully.

"Uncle Jerry will be worried, I 'm afraid," he said. "But if I can't, I can't. Whereabouts is your camp, Young Wolf? You 're awfully good."

"No good. Boy good to me. Save me from young bad hearts in big village. Think me coffee-cooler" (the Indian name for a coward), "but no! no!"—and he shook his head vehemently. "Now my turn. I help white boy. Tepee not far. We walk slow."

As he talked, Young Wolf lifted Jack to the saddle on the back of the now repentant and docile Brutus, mounted his own pony, and holding Jack's

bridle, walked both the ponies slowly toward the river-bank fringed with cottonwoods.

The motion and the down-hanging leg brought intense pain to Jack's swollen ankle, and he clenched his teeth tightly to keep back the groans. He knew the Indian stoicism; he did not propose to let Young Wolf think that a white boy could not bear pain as uncomplainingly as a red boy.

But the watchful eye of the young Indian saw that all was not well with his white friend. He knew that Jack was in pain. Without a word he stopped the ponies, lifted Jack from the saddle, and placed the white boy before him on his own pony with the bad foot trussed up on the pony's back. He himself slipped well back toward the pony's rump. And thus, while Brutus followed after, the two young fellows made their way slowly toward the Indian's tepee, just showing its lodge-poles above the green of the cottonwoods.

In a clear space, within a sheltered grove of cottonwoods, two tepees stood, a hundred yards apart. Young Wolf drew up the pony before the first of the lodges. Already the twilight was turning into dark, the last pink flush of sunset swallowed by the purple shadows.

The young Indian dismounted, tenderly lifted Jack from the saddle, and bearing him in his arms, carried him within the darkened tepee, where he

carefully laid him down upon a big, couch-like pile of buffalo-hide.

Then he went to the door-flap.

" Po-to-sha-sha!" he called, and from somewhere in the outer shadows the steps of his lodge companion hurried toward the tepee.

Jack's exertions had tired him sorely, and in spite of the pain he closed his eyes in semi-slumber.

Through it all he was dimly conscious of voices talking low in a language he did not understand, of fingers manipulating skilfully and tenderly his swollen, aching ankle. The darkness seemed no obstacle to work.

" They must have eyes in their fingers," thought Jack.

Soon his foot was bathed and bandaged, and, with the sense of ease and care-taking in the atmosphere about him, he fell fast asleep.

Jack had gone through a hard day and a harsh experience, mentally as well as physically. Tired nature asserted itself and demanded absolute rest. So Jack slept through the night, and awoke with the daylight stealing in through the half-closed flap of the tepee, to find Young Wolf squatting beside him, his self-constituted nurse and watcher.

" Why! have you been by me all the time?" he exclaimed, thankfully, and instinctively his hand went out toward his Indian friend in gratitude.

For Jack Huntingdon, you see, was an appreciative youth, and the care and interest of his red-skinned host touched him deeply.

Young Wolf grasped the extended hand; the friendly smile sprang to eye and lip.

"Big Tooth better now. Red Top have breakfast soon," he said.

"Big Tooth?" queried Jack, laughing at the name. "Who 's he?"

The Indian laughed softly in reply, and pointed at Jack's parted lips.

It was a fact. Jack Huntingdon's front teeth were rather prominent. The Indian boy, who, like all his race, was furnished with small and regular teeth, had caught the peculiarity of Jack's dental deformity, and, true to Indian usage, had fitted that to his young white friend as an appropriate and distinguishing name.

Jack dearly loved a joke, even on himself. He fingered his large front teeth and laughed aloud with his host.

"That 's a fact; my teeth are big," he said. "So that 's my name, eh? Not Jack Huntingdon, but Big Tooth," and he laughed again.

"Big Tooth good name till white boy can be a brave and make a true boast," Young Wolf explained. And "Big Tooth" Jack Huntingdon remained until—but that comes later in the story.

"But what about the big chief I saw in New York —Red Cloud, you know? Are you with him, Young Wolf?"

"Mock-peah-lu-tah—Red Cloud? No, no," replied Young Wolf. "He Ogallala. We Oncapapa."

Jack had not yet, as he expressed it, "got the Injuns down fine." He had not yet fathomed all the differences and divergencies of kinship and tribal divisions.

"Oh, well, you 're all Sioux, I suppose," he hazarded.

Young Wolf laughed.

"Yes, all Sioux," he replied. "White men all same, but not all same, too," he explained. "Some Bostons; some Long Swords; some Great Father's lodge-people."

Jack stood corrected. "That 's so; I understand what you mean," he said. "But say, Young Wolf!" he exclaimed, the force of the coincidence for the first time coming home to him, "how under the sun did you happen to be here just when I needed you? Of all people in the world, you were the last I could have expected to see, and yet you were just the boy to help me. How did it happen?"

Young Wolf swept his hand about the tepee in a comprehensive and proprietary manner.

"This all our land," he said. "It free to Young

Wolf same as the big village where Big Tooth live free to him."

"That 's so," Jack agreed. "Only it 's funny you happened here just now. Where 's your village?"

"Off; two moons," and Young Wolf waved his hand toward the north.

"Just these two tepees, eh?" pointed Jack. "What are you doing here—hunting?"

"No—just here."

"Well, what for? Can't you tell a fellow?"

"Big Tooth like Boston; always ask—ask. Better not. Have breakfast soon. Too much ask, not much eat."

And the Indian boy laughed heartily at his own wit. Just then the red-haired squaw-man — the white man turned Indian—put his head through the open tepee-flap.

"Breakfast 's ready," he announced.

"No ask now. Eat," again laughed Young Wolf, as he helped Jack to his feet.

The sprained ankle was nearly cured, thanks to rest and helpful treatment, and Jack found that, with Young Wolf's assistance, he could limp out to the breakfast, which they ate seated before the camp-fire.

As they chatted Jack looked inquiringly toward the other tepee, the flaps of which were tightly closed. He grew inquisitive again.

"Is that your tent, Mr.—" he paused for a name. It did n't seem just right to call the renegade white man Mr. Red Top, and Jack's hesitation was natural.

"He Po-to-sha-sha—Red Top—see scalp?" and Young Wolf touched the unmistakably red hair of his white camp-mate. "No, that not Red Top's tepee."

"Whose is it, then?" Jack persisted.

Then Young Wolf glanced toward the closed tepee and laid a warning finger on his lips.

"Sh!" he said. "Big Tooth no ask. That medicine-tent."

Jack ached to ask what a medicine-tent was; and why they had a medicine-tent off there, away from everybody. But even his inquisitiveness was silenced by his friend's warning motion. Evidently it was a mystery, or not for him to question into. Still he would like to know, he said to himself.

He was to find out speedily. For, as the three still lingered about the morning camp-fire, suddenly the closed flaps of the mysterious tepee parted, and out of its gloomy recesses stalked a big Indian.

He was "big Injun" indeed. As tall as Red Cloud and even heavier in build, he was not such a one as man or boy would care to meet as Jack Huntingdon now met him—alone and on his native heath. His face, plentifully pitted from smallpox,

was lighter than that of Young Wolf, and had none of the frank, open, attractive features of the full-blooded Sioux youth. He was evidently a man in the prime of life, broad-faced, stern-browed, strong of will and shrewd of eye, brown-haired, strongly built, and of splendid physique.

The newcomer was naked to the waist. Deerskin breeches, plentifully fringed, decorated moccasins, and a great black-and-white hawk feather in his smoothed brown hair made up his sole costume. He dragged behind him a decorated buffalo-robe, and, as he stalked toward the group beside the camp-fire, he darted at Jack a glance that was anything but friendly. But he turned first to Young Wolf with a brief, guttural query, which Jack was certain meant "Who 's your friend?"

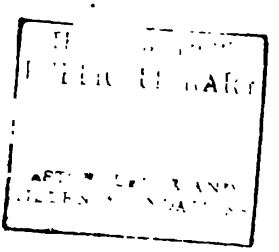
Young Wolf replied at once, evidently outlining Jack's story and antecedents; but the chief, if chief he were, seemed far from satisfied.

He wheeled toward Jack, half in menace, half in inquiry. Then he called sharply, "Po-to-sha-sha!"

The renegade was quickly beside him. The big Indian poured out a torrent of questions. The squaw-man looked at Jack.

"Boy," he said, translating, "the chief says who are you—where from—what do you want here—are you with the stone-hammerers—those fellows the

SITTING BULL, YOUNG WOLF, AND JACK. *Page 35.*



Great Father has sent here hunting for gold—the red man's gold ? Answer him."

" Why, yes," Jack replied frankly. " Did n't I tell you so ? Oh, no, it was Young Wolf. You see, I came with the scientific expedition sent out by the Government at Washington to see if there 's any gold worth getting here in the Black Hills. We found out. There is."

The squaw-man interpreted.

An angry frown darkened the scarred and swarthy face of the big chief. He flung the buffalo-robe aside and with both hands raised bore down on poor Jack, who now had found his legs, and was standing facing the angry chief, plucky but puzzled.

Instantly Young Wolf sprang between the two. Then, laying a hand on Jack's breast, he threw out a torrent of words at the hostile chief.

" Po-to-sha-sha ! " again came the call, and again the listening squaw-man swiftly translated from the original.

" The chief says you have no right here," he said—" you and your stone-hammerers ! But Young Wolf says you are his brother and he stakes his life on your good heart. But the chief says this is the Injun's ground, sacred to his spirits, and no white man shall set foot here and live. He says the white men shall not buy Pah-sap-pa—that 's these Black Hills, you know. He says he is here

to make medicine—good medicine for the Injun—bad medicine for the white man. He will make the land shrivel up and starve the white men off the Injun land. He says you are a thief and the son of a thief, and that no one like you shall go out of these hills alive. It looks bad for you, sonny. Young Wolf says you 're a good chap. Can't you say something?"

What could he say? Jack was a bit nonplussed.

"I did n't ask to come here, did I?" he cried hotly. "I got lost, and if it had n't been for Young Wolf here I might have died. It is n't square to treat me so. It 's not hospitable. I thought all Injuns were hospitable. We are. See what the Great Father did for you folks when you came to Washington with Red Cloud."

The renegade interpreted, but the big chief grew even more angry.

"What did he do for us?" he exclaimed, through his interpreter. "He sent us back empty. He filled us only with promises, and now sends thieves to rob us of our hunting-grounds and our gold. It is our land. We will keep it—every foot—hill and plain and river. That is what the chief says he told Red Cloud. He tells you so; and he will wither every white foot that treads the Indian's land."

As he ended, the chief's anger seemed to grow with his words. He thrust Young Wolf aside with

rough and hasty hand, and then paused an instant as though he would lay violent hands on the white boy who stood in his path.

Jack thought quickly. It was a situation that called for rapid reflection. An inspiration came to him.

"Red Cloud! Why, see here," he said; "see what Red Cloud himself gave me when he was in New York. He told me it would keep me safe from harm among all the Injuns beyond the Missouri."

And Jack Huntingdon thrust full into the face of the big chief what he had that instant drawn from his inner pocket—his most cherished memento, the eagle feather of Red Cloud the Ogallala.

The big chief looked at the token closely.

"He wants to know where you got this," said Red Top.

Jack explained.

Slowly the chief returned the token to its owner. Slowly he lifted the buffalo-robe from the ground and draped it gracefully over his naked shoulder. Slowly he spoke in deep and guttural tones to Po-to-sha-sha, the renegade. Then he walked into his tepee and shut the daylight out.

Young Wolf and Red Top looked at each other in silence.

"What 's he say?" queried Jack.

The squaw-man laid a hand on the boy's shoulder.

"You want to brace up, sonny. It 's going wrong with you," he said, not unkindly.

"Why, how 's that?" the white boy asked.

"The chief will stay in his tepee until the sun is highest—that 's noon, you know," announced Red Top. "He says Red Cloud is Ogallala. He is Oncapapa. But for Red Cloud's feather and what you did for Young Wolf, he will wait till his medicine talks. He goes into his tepee now to make medicine. If it is good medicine, you must stay with him and become an Injun—like me"—the squaw-man's voice had in it just a shade of self-contempt. "If it is bad medicine, you die—but like a brave, he says—not like a coward. He says it must either be Injun or scalp. He 'll have no spy, he says, in the lodges of To-tan-ka-i-yo-ta-ke."

"Whew!" Jack gave a whistle of incredulity. "He don't dare—see here, Mr.—Red Top! Who is this Ta-tan—what-you-may-call-it? Who is your chief, anyhow?"

"What? You don't know?" demanded the renegade. "Did not Young Wolf tell you?"

"He is To-tan-ka-i-yo-ta-ke—the bull that sits," Young Wolf explained.

"No! Not Sitting Bull—the big war-chief of the Sioux," cried Jack. "Well! I am in a pickle!"

And he certainly was.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BIG CHIEF'S MEDICINE.

JACK'S first impulse was to mount his pony and ride for his life. But an instant's reflection convinced him that such escape was impossible. Even were he in condition for a break-neck dash, his absolute ignorance as to the path to safety would make such an attempt little better than a jump from the frying-pan to the fire. He was a lost boy; he was, practically, a crippled boy; he could not hope to find his way to the distant camp of the government explorers; his only reliance was upon his own wits, or upon the friendship of Young Wolf. At all events, Jack Huntingdon was not a boy to give in without a struggle.

He turned to Young Wolf. That perplexed young warrior was evidently doing a good deal of hard thinking. But he spoke no word; he gave no answering sign to Jack's look of inquiry.

As for Po-to-sha-sha, there was evidently no help to be expected from that quarter. The squaw-man lay flat on his back, placidly looking up into the distant blue of the Wyoming sky, thinking, apparently, of nothing at all.

Jack was nonplussed; he felt himself deserted by the world; and yet here was a case in which even self-reliance seemed at fault. Again he turned to the Indian lad.

"What under the sun can I do, Young Wolf?" he cried. "He won't dare touch me, will he?"

"To-tan-ka-i-yo-ta-ke—how you call him?—Sitting Bull—dare much—do much. But so can Young Wolf," the red boy replied. "Big Tooth wait. What shall come, shall come."

It seemed the only thing to do, and though Jack, like all American boys, was impatient under delay, he was also, like most American boys, openly optimistic—that is, he was certain something would turn up to bring things around all right. Besides, so implicit had become his confidence in his Indian friend, that he at once threw upon Young Wolf the responsibility of escape from an unpleasant situation, and calmly awaited developments.

They came all too soon. For as Po-to-sha-sha, still lazily stretched upon his back, cross-examined Jack—without, it must be confessed, any very definite results—as to the indications of gold discovered by the government explorers, once again the tepee flap sparted, and Sitting Bull strode up to the waiting three.

Evidently his medicine sleep had been short, and his vision had been quick to come. There was a

sinister smile on his scarred face, and in his eye an uncomplimentary look that boded no good to young Jack Huntingdon.

" Po-to-sha-sha! "

The squaw-man slowly gathered himself up, and stood as interpreter between the chief and the boy. Then the big Indian gave his verdict.

" The chief has seen the future," the squaw-man translated. " His medicine says die, boy. (It 's a rank shame, too, sonny," he added as a quick aside). " The chief's medicine is bad for those who come to the Black Hills, he says, to spy out the Indian's land; it is bad medicine for the white foot that dares to tread the Indian's sacred ground, here under the shadow of Mato Tepee—the Bear Lodge, you know, sonny—the Tower of the Great Bad Spirit," and Po-to-sha-sha waved his hand toward the mysterious basalt column which white men call " the Devil's Tower," as it springs from its sedimentary rock above the Belle Fourche.

" The chief likes you, boy," the squaw-man continued, though Jack could see no indications of such affection on the big chief's impassive face. " He says you did good to Young Wolf in the white man's big village, and you bear the eagle feather of the chief Red Cloud. He would like to make you one of his sons, but the Indian must obey his medicine. If it says you live—you live. But it says die

— and you die — now — like a warrior, he says. Stand up, boy, the chief says; stand up, and die as a brave should, by the hand of him who makes medicine for his brothers, of him who is the leader of the Sioux!"

"And I say," added the squaw-man, as a sort of anti-climax, "watch out, sonny; watch out and be ready; the Bull's knife is a big one, but you be spry and dodge it."

Jack Huntingdon, as you know, was no coward; but the unexpected and startlingly prompt verdict of Sitting Bull, coupled with the squaw-man's warning, unnerved him for an instant, as it might any one, and he sank limply to the ground.

Then, quickly recovering himself, he sprang to his feet, and catching up the weapon of defence nearest at hand—a half-burned but stout ash stick from the smouldering fire—he faced the big chief defiantly.

"You 're a coward and a fraud!" he cried hotly. "You 're afraid to take a man of your size. Dare to lay a hand on me and I 'll brain you like a mad dog, you leather-skinned yelper. Touch me, if you dare. I 've got the whole United States at my back, and they 'll show you what it is to knife an unarmed Yankee boy. Come on, you coward Injun! I 'm not afraid of you." And Jack brandished his charred stick, and "cavorted" before the stern-faced Indian in a way that clearly disconcerted that

redoubtable chief and, as Shakspere has it, quite "gave him pause."

He turned to Po-to-sha-sha inquiringly, and the squaw-man rendered an immediate and literal translation of the white boy's defiance, omitting neither taunt nor epithet; for these, indeed, are the embellishments and "frescoes" especially cultivated by the Indian warrior at bay—the emphasis and signs of an unconquerable bravery.

It raised Jack perceptibly in the big chief's estimation. A smile of approval crossed his swarthy face, and some expression of Indian approbation of pluck came from his lips. But none the less did he pluck the hunting-knife from his belt and, with one brief poise for a good aim, hurl it straight at his boyish antagonist.

But that brief halt for aim saved Jack Huntingdon's life. Fortunately the sun was in the Indian's eyes; the boy had the advantage of position. As Sitting Bull poised his knife, Jack grasped his ash stick, like the trained baseball player he was, and when, the next instant, the knife came spinning toward him, he met it with so sure and so vigorous a "strike" that the murderous weapon went sailing so high in air above chief and tepee and tree-top that, as Jack afterward declared, he felt just like flinging down his bat and making at least a three-bagger, if not a home run.

But he thought better of it and stood his ground, still defiant and silent.

"Good boy, sonny," cried the squaw-man, under his breath, while Young Wolf and Sitting Bull looked their astonishment and admiration at the white boy's deftness and ability.

Slowly the chief detached a short coil of lariat from his belt. Then he gave an order to Po-to-sha-sha and Young Wolf.

The renegade took one step in obedience toward Jack.

"The Bull says for us to ketch and tie you, sonny," he explained. "Don't you go for to stop us; it 'll be bad for you if you do."

Jack grasped his stick the firmer. But the interference did not come from him. It came from quite another quarter.

For, as the squaw-man took another wary step in Jack's direction, Young Wolf sprang between them, pushed the renegade back with a determined shove, and openly faced Sitting Bull, interposing in behalf of his white friend.

The Indian speech came fast from boy and chief. It was all untranslatable to Jack, but the sign accompaniments that play so large a part in Indian talk gave him some inkling of the situation.

Clearly Young Wolf was openly braving his chief. His proud attitude; his defiant expression; his elo-

quent gestures; his emphatic and fiery denunciation, all showed that to the observant and anxious white boy; while the scorn, surprise, contempt, and threatenings of the big chief, changing finally to protest, argument, concession, and an ungracious yielding, all of which could be read by the watchful Jack in the tones and gestures of the big chief, showed the boy that, whatever the line of Young Wolf's arguments and action, it had led to a cessation of hostilities, and that the young brave had won the fight.

For, suddenly, with but a single word thrown out at Young Wolf with an emphasis that halted between a grunt and a hiss, the big chief turned on his heel and strode again into the seclusion of his tepee.

It was now Jack Huntingdon's turn to be astonished. Yet even his surprise and wonderment over the manner in which Young Wolf had both defended and saved him could not overcome his gratitude. Impulsively he made at his Indian friend and flung both arms about him in an excess of excited thankfulness.

"Young Wolf, you 're a brick!" he cried. "How did you do it? What under the sun did you say to him? You 've saved my life a second time. What did you do?"

But Young Wolf answered him never a word.

He turned upon the white boy a look in which enthusiasm, friendship, impassiveness, and uncertainty were curiously mingled, roughly disengaged himself from his white friend's grasp, and, still silent, wheeled about and disappeared within the solitude of the other tepee, as stolidly and majestically as Sitting Bull himself.

Jack Huntingdon looked at Po-to-sha-sha inquiringly.

"What is it all about?" he asked.

The squaw-man's face was itself a study. He glanced hastily from one tepee to the other, as if expectant of some new conflit or explosion. Then, slouching up to Jack, he took him by the buttonhole and softly led him out of earshot, in the direction of the river-bank. There his amazement found voice.

"Sonny," said he, wheeling Jack about and looking him full in the face, "you 've just seen a big fight. You can thank your lucky stars it came out as it did; for if it had gone the other way, it would have been 'good-night, John!' for you and Young Wolf, too. You and the young chief have both got sand, sonny—heaps of it. That 's the first time I ever saw the Bull downed by a boy—two of 'em, b' George!"

"How did I down him, Mr.—Red Top?" queried puzzled Jack. "And how did Young Wolf? For

goodness sakes, tell us all about it. I could n't make it out."

Po-to-sha-sha squatted beneath a cottonwood and pulled Jack down beside him.

"You stood him off fine, sonny," he said. "The Bull, he ain't used to being faced by a boy like that. He 's big medicine, you know, and we folks don't any of us dare to sarse back, or he 'll work a charm on us that 'll wind us all up. You did n't know that; so you just shivered the Bull, don't you see? But Young Wolf knows what the big chief can do; and he thinks p'r'aps it 's all up with him. That 's why he 's gone into the tepee so quiet like. He wants to think it over and see if he can't dream a way out of the Bull's bad medicine. How he did face him, though! I thought for sure the big chief would just cut him down where he stood."

"But what did Young Wolf say to him—can't you tell me?" persisted Jack.

"Well, this is what he said," replied Po-to-sha-sha, with an uneasy backward glance toward the silent medicine tent. "When he mighty nigh knocked me over—'cause you see, sonny, I just nach'elly had to do what the big chief told me—he 'd have made it hot for me if I had n't," the squaw-man explained—"he just faced the Bull, and says he, 'The white boy is my friend,' says he, 'he 's a brave, and shall not be tied and whipped

like a dog'—that's what the Bull told us to do to you, sonny."

"Tied me and whipped me, would you?" cried Jack. "Well, I guess not. I'd like to have seen you trying it."

"Well, I tell you, we'd have had to if the Bull said so," expostulated Po-to-sha-sha. "I did n't want to; you're a plucky chap. But what the big chief says goes, you see. So if Young Wolf had helped, we 'd have trussed and flayed you. Gracious sonny! you have to do lots of things in this world you don't want to do—that 's why I 'm here—a squaw-man," and Po-to-sha-sha would have wandered away into his own grievances if Jack had not recalled him.

"But Young Wolf would n't do it, eh?" he said.

"No. Young Wolf would n't do it, and he up and told the Bull so," the squaw-man replied. "And when the big chief blazed out at him, and told him he 'd have to do it if he said so, Young Wolf up and gives it to him straight. 'You!' he says. 'Who are you to talk so to me? I am a chief of the Uncapapas. I am the son of a chief. And you! You are no chief——'"

"Sitting Bull no chief!" cried Jack, incredulously. "Why, what did he mean?"

"See here, sonny, I 'm a-telling this story.

Don't you go for to break in on me, or I won't tell a thing," the squaw-man objected. " Just you hear me out. ' You 're no chief,' says Young Wolf, tossing up his head like a buck elk, ' you 're just a medicine-man. Go into your tepee and dream your lying dreams and make up your bad medicine to lead fool Injuns astray, but don't be giving me orders or go to hectoring of my friends, or I 'll lay it before the Ni-ka-ga-hi '— that 's the assembly of head chiefs, you know. Well! right there 's where I thought it was all up with Young Wolf. Whew! but was n't the Bull mad! He hates to be crossed, you see. He 's just as bad as a white man in that. ' Boy! ' he yells at Young Wolf—I reckon you heard him—' Boy ' he yells, ' I am *Wa-ku-be !* '—that 's sacred—medicine, you know. There ain't one of us but is afraid of that when a medicine-man yells it out. But Young Wolf, you see—his blood was up. He just straightened up—you saw him, p'r'aps—and hit himself on the breast. ' And I am *We-jic-te* '—that 's of the highest chiefs, you know—an Elk—none higher. And when Young Wolf says that, the Bull he had to come down a peg, for the Elks have the first place in the tribe, and they 've got the call even on the medicine man.

" Well, so they had it out, as you saw, criss-cross, hot and heavy, until, I vum! even the Bull had to

give in, and he just dropped everything and went into his tepee to try for fresh medicine. But I reckon Young Wolf feels kind of petered out, now it 's all over; for to stand out against the medicine-man—'specially when he leads 'em all as Sitting Bull does—is about as skeery a thing as it would be for you to go for to say 'Boo!' to the President of the U—nited States."

And Jack fully understood from that simile just how much of a risk his friend Young Wolf had run in thus facing down the great leader of the Uncapapa Sioux.

"But what was it that Sitting Bull sung out when he went into his tepee?" the boy asked the squaw-man.

"Oh, that? It kind of did up Young Wolf, did n't it?" was the squaw-man's comment. "The big chief just sung out 'Strong Hearts!' as a sort of a flyer, you see."

"'Strong Hearts'? What 's that mean?" queried Jack; "sort of whistling to keep his courage up before Young Wolf?"

"Whistling! Well, I reckon not. He don't need that," replied Po-to-sha-sha. "Why, Sitting Bull is the Master of the Strong Hearts; and they don't give in, I can tell you."

"The Master of the Strong Hearts?" Jack was certainly learning many new things, and each one

only increased his curiosity. "What 's that?" he queried; "some sort of a secret society?"

"That 's just where you 're right, sonny," the squaw-man assented with an emphatic nod. "The Strong Hearts are just the biggest, secretest, most consarnedly bravest and determined of all the Sioux societies. And their main point, in all their doings is just this: never to back down, back out, or give up, when once they 've determined to do anything. And that 's what the Bull meant. He 's determined to do you up and get rid of you for belonging to that gold-hunting expedition and setting foot here in the Injun's sacredest land, where he had come to make medicine. That 's what he 's bound to do. He just sung out 'Strong Hearts,' to Young Wolf as a sort of what you call—reminder. And he 's the head man of 'em all—he 's Master of the Strong Hearts. That 's why it looks bad for you yet, sonny; though, I vum, I hope he 'll let up on you. You 're a plucky chap, as I said, and I want to see you go scot-free—if you can."

"Then he is no warrior—no chief at all—not even like Young Wolf, eh?" Jack queried. "How did he get such a name, then? Everybody calls him a big chief."

"So he is; but not a big war-chief," Po-to-sha-sha explained. "It 's like this: Sitting Bull is a great fellow to spout, you see. And plan! Well,

he can just plan you off the earth. But I never knew him to lead on the war-path—never. He leaves the real fighting to some of the other big chiefs—like Red Cloud, or Gall, or Iron Hawk, or Rain-in-the-Face. The Bull, he just makes medicine for the boys, and they pitch in and fight, while he dreams things out for 'em and eggs 'em on. That gives him a big influence over 'em all, and they just look up to him for advice how to do things and when to do 'em. Then, too, the Strong Hearts are about the biggest fighters of all the Sioux out of the agencies—hostiles, you folks call 'em; and his being head chief or Master of the Strong Hearts puts him 'way up front, so we don't any of us dare to cross him or even to talk back to him, as Young Wolf did just now. Whew! but won't he just get square with Young Wolf somehow! I would n't like to be in that boy's moccasins. The Bull never forgives, and I tell you he never forgets. Don't I know that? I would n't be here if I did n't."

Interest in his own affairs, even in his own fate, could not entirely close Jack Huntingdon's ears to these words, nor his eyes to the look that accompanied them. Po-to-sha-sha evidently had a story, and all Jack's interest and curiosity were aroused.

He looked closely at the squaw-man's face, shadowed as it now was by some unpleasant but overpowering memory. Bronzed by exposure al-

most to the Indian tint, dressed like an Indian, with few remnants of the garb of civilization, the man's long red hair and his unmistakable American tongue alone marked him as a "paleface." But Jack could see that he had not become renegade and back-slider into barbarism entirely from choice, or simply through love for his Indian wife. There was a stronger reason back of it all. That reason covered a story, and that story Jack Huntingdon greatly desired to hear.

He was just on the point of putting his desire into words, when a light step paused beside him, and a light touch fell upon his shoulder. He looked up. His eyes met those of Young Wolf, his champion.

"Big Tooth come with me," he said. "To-tan-ka make new medicine. He say tell white boy come. Big Tooth be brave. Tepee no worse than big village. We find way out. He Strong Heart, I strong heart, too!"

And Young Wolf straightened so visibly and defiantly that Jack did the same, and together the two boys sought the tent of the big medicine chief, the squaw-man slouching slowly in their rear.

CHAPTER V.

A MODERN REGULUS.

IN the open space between the two tepees Sitting Bull awaited them. His eyes had the same baleful light, his face was as stolid as ever. But as Jack approached him an attempt at a smile curved the broad mouth upward, and the proffered hand-shake was accompanied by a distinct and apparently friendly "How."

Jack was not altogether a believer in this apparent change of heart, so he was watchful and on his guard even while accepting the hand-shake and returning the "How." But Sitting Bull had evidently changed his tactics, and no hostilities in ambush followed the suspicious show of cordiality.

Instead, the demand for the interpreter came at once and sharply:

"Po-to-sha-sha!"

The squaw-man was beside his chief instantly, and Sitting Bull, with the usual accompaniment of sign and gesture, announced the latest result of his medicine.

"It is good medicine this time, boy," the squaw-

man translated. "He has seen the Old Squaw—that 's one of the Injun spirits around here, you know, sonny. It 's luck to see her. The chief says the Old Squaw was dancing the red paint dance yonder on the top of the great Tower. She had the good grass medicine in her hand, and as she danced she sang a good song for the white boy—that 's you, sonny."

"Well, that sounds better," was Jack's gratified comment, as Po-to-sha-sha paused for more. "I owe you one for that, Young Wolf."

"White boy wait. To-tan-ka not through yet," the young Indian replied.

To-tan-ka (the Bull) indeed was not through yet. He launched into another harangue which Po-to-sha-sha duly translated.

"The Old Squaw told the chief to let the white boy go," the renegade began, "but let him go to return. (Ah ha! sonny, I thought there was a string to that pardon," Po-to-sha-sha commented, while Young Wolf looked at Jack meaningly). "It is not safe for the Bull, so the chief says, or any of his young men to bear a message. Red Cloud went to the Great Father for a gift, and what did he get ?—nothing. The young men of the Bull are hostiles; it would not be safe for them to walk in the big villages beyond the sunrise—he means your towns in the East, you know. But Big Tooth

here—that 's you, sonny—shall bear a message from him to the Great Father and to Chief Long Hair—that 's General Custer, you know, boy; he was out here last year with his soldiers and we tried to do him up, but it was a draw between him and the Bull, you see."

"Why," said Jack in much surprise as Po-to-sha-sha ceased, "I don't know the President—nor General Custer either. I never saw them, though my father fought under Custer in the Valley."

"Say! you 'd better not object," the squaw-man warned him in swift reply. "It 's your only chance to go scot free. I know the Bull. I know what he 's up to. Eh, Young Wolf?"

"White boy say yes, keep scalp; say no—" and Young Wolf paused significantly.

"Oh, it 's a sort of Hobson's choice, is it?" said Jack. "Well, go ahead, Mr. Red Top. Tell the chief to give me his message. I 'll try it."

Po-to-sha-sha reported, and Sitting Bull proceeded.

"This is the chief's medicine dream and the Old Squaw's orders, boy," the squaw-man translated. "His way would have been to kill you at once, but the good medicine said no."

"Much obliged to the doctor. That 's the first good medicine I ever took," was Jack's characteristic comment.

"She said," Po-to-sha-sha went on, "let the white boy see the Great Father. Let him say that the Dakota—that 's the Sioux, you know, sonny—will never sell to the white men this Powder River country. We will not have here the me-ne-aska (them 's the emigrant trains, boy). He cannot buy the Pah-sap-pa—these Black Hills, he means. They are worth, so the chief says, more than all the wild beasts and all the tame beasts that the white people possess. Let the Great Father know this, and let him send word here, by you, boy, to the chief, that he will not let the me-ne-aska come into this country with their wagons, or the stone-hammerers for gold, and that he will keep back his Long-Swords from the Indian land. Bring the chief this answer, boy, and he will make you, so he says, one of his own Strong Hearts and a chief of the Dakota. But if you say that the Great Father answers 'No,' then shall you be staked out to die."

"That sounds pleasant," said Jack. "I wonder how it will strike the President. General Grant is n't used to giving in to that sort of message. And what about General Custer?"

"Tell the chief Long Hair," said Sitting Bull through his interpreter, "that but for the Long-Swords who came to help him, I would have had his scalp last year at our fight on the Yellowstone. Tell him that To-tan-ka-i-yo-ta-ke waits him here.

Let him come by the thieves' road—that 's the trail along which Custer marched last year, sonny—he and his brother the Little Hair, and the Ree coffee-coolers—them 's the Injuns, the Ree scouts, boy; the Bull hates 'em like pizen—and the chief and Rain-in-the-Face will fight 'em, man to man, like braves in battle. But if you say that the chief Long Hair will not come, then—" here the squaw-man broke off suddenly and scratched his head dubiously —" well, sonny, then the chief says he 'll stake you out to die. You 'd better say ' Yes ' right off," the friendly renegade added. " I 'd promise every time, I would."

It was now Jack's turn to deliberate. " If I promise, I promise, and I keep my promises," he said; to which, when the squaw-man had put it into Sioux, the chief said his only English sentence, " Heap good! How!" and forthwith proceeded to shake hands again with Jack.

" Yes, but hold on, Mr. Red Top," said Jack. " I have n't promised yet. I want to think it over. What is this staking-out business you threaten if I fail ? Something Injun and gentlemanly ? "

" It 's Sioux," the squaw-man replied, hesitating how best to sugar-coat the pill; "and it ain't real nice, sonny. Fact is, I 'd promise anything to get clear of it."

" Well, but what is it ? " persisted Jack.

"Why, you see," the renegade explained slowly, "they just strip you and peg you down, legs and arms stretched wide apart; and then they build a fire on your stomach and play with you with burning sticks. It don't sound good, but—you would have it, you see."

Jack winced under the explanation, while even the squaw-man looked troubled.

"That 's what I get if I bring back a 'No,' is it?" the boy queried. "It is n't real exhilarating, and that 's a fact. Well, suppose I say, now, right here, that I won't take the messages. What then?"

Po-to-sha-sha hesitated; then, turning to the big chief, he propounded Jack's query.

For answer the chief wheeled about, and motioning the three to follow him ascended a little rise, where at the base of the North Mesa, the Red Valley lay verdant and beautiful beneath them. Where the Indian trail to the Powder River country wound across it certain moving forms could be descried—a dozen Sioux warriors on their lithe and tireless ponies.

"See them," Sitting Bull declared through Po-to-sha-sha. "They are Strong Hearts. If I say the word, here, under the shadow of the Bad Spirit's Tower, they will, before the sun is highest, stake out first Young Wolf, who has made a brother of a spy and brought into the red man's sacred ground the

son of a thief, and then will they stake out the spy himself—Big Tooth, the white boy. For heaven's sake, sonny, promise anything," the renegade hurriedly advised. "I may get into this thing, too, if you don't. You don't want to hurt Young Wolf, do you? And say! that ain't a nice thing to have done to you either—it ain't now, really."

Decision, even when the odds are strong against you, is not always easy. In this case Jack Huntingdon found it especially hard. For, as I have told you, Jack could be depended upon to keep a promise, and Sitting Bull, who could shrewdly read character, knew it.

"Young Wolf," cried the boy, turning to his Indian friend, "what shall I do—what shall I say?"

"Big Tooth say — do — what he please," the young Indian replied, without a change of expression. "What he do, what he say, Young Wolf stand by. If 'No,' then Young Wolf die like a brave. He strong heart as much as the Bull that sits. He Big Tooth's friend till death. How!"

And the faithful young brave, who would not help Jack to a decision, but was ready to stand beside him come life or death, extended his hand to Jack as token of faith and loyalty.

"But see here, Mr. Red Top," Jack exclaimed, turning upon the squaw-man, "is n't this just a bluff? Would the chief dare to—ugh!—stake out,

as you call it—Young Wolf, his tribesman? They are both Uncapapa. Would n't the tribe have something to say if he should kill a kinsman?"

"Well, sonny, they might *say*," Po-to-sha-sha replied; "but would they *do?* That 's the question. The Bull is the king pin in the lodges just now; Red Cloud has turned coffee-cooler; the Bull is the only real head to the hostiles—unless it 's Chief Gall. The Bull has got the Strong Hearts behind him. Besides, he 's one of the Fox family; Young Wolf is an Elk. You don't know what that means, but I do. I reckon the Bull will go ahead and do what he wants to, and square it up with the lodges afterwards."

"Jingoes! it 's hard lines," cried Jack when he had mused an instant; "but go ahead, Mr. Red Top," he decided swiftly and impulsively. "Young Wolf shall not suffer for me. Tell the chief I promise. I 'll carry his messages."

Po-to-sha-sha translated.

"And will the boy bring back the answer?" the chief demanded.

"Of course; that 's the bargain. Have n't I promised?" cried Jack loftily.

"It is well. Big Tooth is a brave. To-tan-ka trusts him. See! the Strong Hearts come as brothers, not as destroyers," Sitting Bull responded through his renegade interpreter. And he shook

hands heartily with the white boy, ending with his one English phrase, " Heap good. How!"

Then, striding down the hill, while the others followed at his bidding, Sitting Bull went forward to meet his brother Strong Hearts.

And the squaw-man said, " Mighty wise in you, sonny, to say ' Yes.' You 're a cute one, you are. If you don't find a way out of this to save your scalp, then I don't know you. There 's more 'n one way to kill a cat."

Young Wolf said nothing; but he grasped his white friend's hand in absolute trustfulness. The light of comradeship and friendship sprang from eye to eye, and Jack with the ready optimism of boyhood exclaimed: " We 'll get out of it somehow, Young Wolf. It 's a good ways to Washington and back, and I 'll do a heap of thinking, I can tell you."

The three flung themselves down in the shadow of the pines, while Sitting Bull went on alone a gunshot farther and there awaited the newcomers.

" Did Sitting Bull get hold of you some way like that, Mr. Red Top ? " Jack demanded of the squaw-man.

Po-to-sha-sha nodded his affirmative.

" Well, it is a foxy move," Jack exclaimed. " You said he belonged to the Fox family, did n't you ? I should say he 's the head Fox of 'em all. But does an Elk stand that, Young Wolf ? What 's

the good of being an elk with a good fighting pair of horns if you can't toss a fox, I 'd like to know ?"

Young Wolf laughed meaningly.

" Fox heap sly," he said. " Fox dodge and squirm, but elk horns cut sometimes. Change bad medicine to good. Big Tooth saw that ?"

" Yes, yes, I know," Jack replied enthusiastically. " You faced him well then, Young Wolf. Do you 'spose he 's forgotten ?"

" To-tan-ka never forget. He never forgive," said the Indian.

" But why did n't you face him down again when he sprung that staking-out threat on us just now ?" queried Jack.

Young Wolf rose to his elbow and laid a hand impressively on Jack Huntingdon's breast.

" What done, done," he said. " Fox sly, but Elk can wait. When fire burn prairie, fight it with another fire. Big Tooth, see. Young Wolf no fool. We wait. See Strong Hearts coming ? That good 'nuff reason."

" That 's so," Jack agreed. " Twelve to two is pretty big odds. I guess you know what you 're about, Young Wolf. What do you say, Mr. Red Top ?"

The squaw-man opened his half-shut eyes lazily.

" Well, I 'll tell you, sonny," he said. " When I gits cornered, I caves, see ? And the fellow that

caves can dig out in time, if he 'll only watch out for his chance. I let things go as they please and say ' Yes ' to everything. It 's the easiest way, and it pays best in the long run."

Jack did not by any means subscribe to this doctrine. It was the coward's policy, he felt; and cowardice and Jack Huntingdon had nothing in common. He saw how it had made of a free-born white American a renegade and a barbarian, and his innate patriotism burned in protest. But Jack was learning through harsh experience the lesson that it is well sometimes to hold the tongue behind closed teeth; so he said nothing in rebuttal.

But his inquisitiveness grew upon him. He knew that the renegade had a story behind his cowardice. And it was somehow, he knew, mixed up with Sitting Bull. He wondered what it was.

" How did you come to be an Injun, Mr. Red Top ? " he blurted out, at length.

The squaw-man half rose from the ground. A startled look sprang to his face. He glanced apprehensively toward the distant medicine chief standing impassively waiting for his tribesmen. He glanced at the silent Young Wolf, stretched at full length on the pine needles. Then he laid a hand in warning upon his lips.

" Oh, I just wanted to, that 's why," he answered briefly, and fell back to his lazy position.

And Jack Huntingdon, though he knew there was quite another reason, like a wise boy, refrained from pressing his question.

"Some day I 'll get the whole story straight," he said to himself. And he did, though in quite another fashion than as a simple recital in the bivouac under the pines.

The distant, wavering single line of riders grew more and more distinct; it came nearer and nearer, and the lone chief, from his outlook, with graceful sweeps of his medicine robe sent to the approaching warriors his greeting. In the eloquent language of Indian signals the gesture of welcome was returned; the lithe, half-naked forms bent to the motion of their galloping ponies; soon the savage trappings might be discerned; hawk and eagle feather gracing each head of plaited or of flying hair could next be seen; then features were recognized, and the waiting three, on their feet at last, watching with excitement and admiration the coming of the cavalcade, strained eye and ear for each new sign and sound. Suddenly they saw the chief draw away with an unchecked and audible grunt of recognition and disapproval; half about he turned as if to withdraw from an undesired meeting, and then, as swiftly, wheeled back to position and faced the newcomers once more.

"Ugh!" came from Young Wolf's throat, while

"Well! I vum!" Po-to-sha-sha exclaimed, and both seemed so honestly surprised that Jack turned upon them at once in inquiry.

"What 's the matter with the big chief?" he asked, looking from one to the other of his companions. "Something don't seem to suit him."

"Ugh!" again murmured Young Wolf. "To-tan-ka sick now; we well. It 's Pi-zi!"

"Who?" queried Jack, not catching or understanding the Indian name.

"That 's so, boy. I vum! it is Pi-zi," said the squaw-man, shading his eyes with his hand. "It 's Co-ka-bi-ya-ya,—He who marches in the centre, that means, sonny; but the Injuns call him Pi-zi, that 's 'gall', you see—because when he 's het up by anything he 's bitter as gall. I reckon you know him by that name best—Chief Gall—that 's what the white folks call him. He and Sitting Bull hate each other like pizen. Gall is the big war-chief, you see. He 's a thoroughbred at it, too—a real fighter, different from the Bull. He 's no Strong Heart, nuther. What 's he doing here with those boys, I wonder? Great snakes! now there 'll be fun. Just you stick by Young Wolf, sonny. He 's an Elk, you know, and so is Gall. 'Member what he said about fox and elk. I reckon you 'll see the fur flying pretty soon. Say! this 's no place for me. I don't want to be in

this. It 'll be too interesting. I reckon I 've got business back at the tepee."

Po-to-sha-sha turned to go, but Jack held him fast.

" Hold on, Mr. Red Top," said the boy. " How can I make out what they say unless you tell me ? I don't know their lingo. You 've just got to stay here and translate."

True to his habit of yielding to the masterful, the renegade reconsidered.

" All right," he said, " I 'll stay. Only you just kind of hide me from the Bull and Pi-zi. I want 'em to count me out."

But, all the same, the three " counted in," and gradually drew nearer the scene of the expected conference.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIVAL CHIEFS.

THERE were shrill cries, a tossing of hands and arms, and all the expressive signs of Indian greeting as the dozen riders reined in their ponies and gathered about Sitting Bull.

Then one dismounted and strode up to the chief.

"That 's him; that 's Pi-zi—Chief Gall, you know, sonny," the squaw-man announced in an excited whisper.

Jack looked with much interest and curiosity upon this noted and well-nigh invincible Indian warrior. Tall and of splendid physique, almost a giant in stature, his face was as frank and open as that of Young Wolf himself, between whom and the big warrior Jack fancied that he could trace a resemblance.

"Gall!" he exclaimed in an aside to Po-to-sha-sha, "why, that means bitter, sour and surly. I don't see anything about him that looks that way."

"Huh!" said the renegade, "you don't, eh? Just you wait till you see him real mad once. He 's got more gall than a whole ox-bladder. Now, then,

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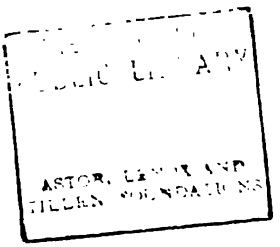
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you hush up, sonny, if you want me to tell you what they 're talking about."

The talking had already commenced. The squaw-man's free translation epitomized the more involved and somewhat figurative language of the Indian chiefs.

"The Bull wants to know what he 's here for, and Gall says, to know his medicine. Then the Bull says he ought to wait or the bad gods of the Tower over yonder (this is all medicine country, you know—what you call haunted) won't send him dreams. Gall says dreams are all right, but he wants to see things done; he says the Long-Swords have got a lot of stone-hammerers over on the Spearfish—that 's your folks and the soldiers, you know—and the miners 'll be just crowding in here, so 's an Injun can't live, he says; he wants to see something done right off, 'fore these Black Hills are all gobbled up by the gold-thieves.

"The Bull says as how his medicine will wither every white foot that steps inside this Black Hill country, but Gall says if the Long-Swords can't keep 'em out, all the Injun medicine can't. He says what 's the good of having big talks and making treaties with the Great Father—that 's the President, you know—if the Great Father's people—your people, sonny—don't keep 'em? He says that Chief Long Hair—that 's General Custer, I

told you about—came in here last year, right after the President had said no white folks should come here; now there 's more soldiers here, and no telling what 's going to happen. He wants somebody to tell Custer and the President the Injuns won't stand such foolishness, and then fight 'em, or fight 'em without telling—that 's what Gall says. Did n't I tell you his name fitted him to a T ?"

"Well, he 's got a gall, anyway—when that means cheek or impudence," was Jack's half-spoken comment. "Does he think he can fight the whole United States army ?"

"He 's willing to try, I reckon—army ain't so very big, you know, and the Bull will find a way, see if he don't," replied Po-to-sha-sha.

"There, what did I tell you ?" he continued, rapidly translating. "The Bull says, kind of salvy-like—don't you hear how smooth he speaks ?—that medicine works slower but surer than knives and arrows. The way for the Injuns to go to work, he says, is to get guns, and then they will be a match for the white soldiers, and the miners too. He says if Gall will only have patience and wait, he 'll fix it for him; the Shata-sute (that 's the Strong Hearts, sonny) shall have guns, he says; his good medicine will fetch 'em."

"Why, that 's foolishness!" Jack exclaimed in an excited whisper. "How can he get guns ? Uncle

Jerry says it 's against the law to sell guns to Injuns."

"Medicine breaks through all laws—leastways, Sitting Bull's medicine does," the squaw-man answered. "I can't tell you how; but if he sets out to get guns, he 'll get 'em. That 's just what he 's saying now, 'cause Gall asked just the same question you did."

"Is that so?" said Jack. "Well, great minds think alike, you know."

"Huh!" the renegade sniffed in criticism; "the Bull 's got the biggest mind of all of you. If he wants his Injuns to have guns, they 'll have 'em—don't you fret. He says he 's dreamed it out already, and if Gall will only hold on to himself and not be in such a 'tarnal hurry, he 'll get a new answer out of the Great Father and Chief Long Hair, and he 'll get the guns too. 'I 've got a scheme,' says the Bull, and—hullo! say! he 's pointing at you, sonny. Lay low; this is where you come in, I reckon. See him pointing at you?"

Sure enough he was. The eloquent gestures of Sitting Bull ended in a dramatic sweep of the hand toward the white boy under the pines.

"Po-to-sha-sha!" came the call from the medicine chief, and, reluctantly enough—for evidently he feared the issue—the renegade slouched forward to join the rival chiefs. There was more talk as

Chief Gall looked inquiringly in Jack's direction, and then Po-to-sha-sha called out, "Come here, boy! the chiefs want you."

Jack had an inspiration. Taking off his hat, he thrust Red Cloud's eagle feather into the band, reset the hat jauntily on his head, and then, rising leisurely to his feet, came forward, with Young Wolf close beside him. Chief Gall looked at the white boy closely; he looked sharply at Young Wolf. Then he beckoned, first to the Indian lad.

Young Wolf stepped forward to meet his kinsman, and, as he did so, Po-to-sha-sha dropped back, and, standing at Jack Huntingdon's elbow, he gave the boy in low but brief and rapid interpretation the substance of what passed between the two Indians of the same lodge-fire—Chief Gall and his nephew, Young Wolf.

And this was what they said:

"Son of the Elk," demanded Gall, as he faced his young kinsman, "what does the white boy here, in the Dakotas' sacred land? Why is he who has four times smoked the sacred pipe" ("that makes Young Wolf a truth-teller, you see," explained the squaw-man) "standing beside the son of the treaty-breakers?"

"Son of the Elk," responded Young Wolf, "why is he who leads, here among the Strong Hearts of To-tan-ka rather than at the head of the Elk herd of Co-ka-bi-ya-ya?"

"That 's so! that 's where the boy 's got him," interjected the squaw-man.

"The Strong Hearts are the brothers of the Elks when danger threatens the Dakotas," said Gall, haughtily. "The Elk can never be brother to the treaty-breakers."

"This white boy is my friend; he is no treaty-breaker," Young Wolf declared promptly. "He saved me from the bad hearts in his own big village by the great salt water. The Master of the Strong Hearts, here, in our own lodges, makes medicine against my white brother. I have a vow to save Big Tooth, my blood-brother, even with my life, against the threats of To-tan-ka, the medicine chief."

The big warrior whirled about and faced the medicine chief angrily.

"Has To-tan-ka threatened Young Wolf?" he demanded. "Has the Bull with the heart of a fox dared lift his hand against the grandson of the Great Elk?" For Apa-tan-ga, the Great Elk, was the great war-chief of the Sioux in 1840, and was a name for later Sioux to conjure with.

"The Old Squaw has spoken and To-tan-ka has but obeyed," Sitting Bull replied. "Does Pi-zi brave the commands of the Old Squaw of the Bad Gods' Tower?"

"As against one of his own blood? Yes. Why should he not?" Gall retorted defiantly.

"It is medicine," Sitting Bull proclaimed.

"Then is it false medicine," said Gall. "Let To-tan-ka beware. What has he threatened?" he demanded of Young Wolf.

The Indian lad caught his kinsman's defiant spirit and answered boldly, in spite of the stern looks of Sitting Bull.

"To stake out here, on the Dakotas' sacred lands, first your brother of the Elk-lodge, Young Wolf, and then his blood-brother, Big Tooth, the white boy," Young Wolf reported.

"Is this true?" cried Gall hotly, turning again on Sitting Bull. "Has To-tan-ka dared to threaten an Elk with the staking-out?"

"He who strikes hands with a thief and the son of thieves—he who would make a blood-brother of a spy—is traitor to the Dakotas, and must die. Thus says the medicine," Sitting Bull made answer.

"Would Young Wolf be blood-brother to a spy?" demanded Gall, turning now, in distrust, upon his young kinsman. "Speak. What is this To-tan-ka says of my little brother?"

"Big Tooth is no spy," returned Young Wolf as indignantly. "He is a brave. Our brothers of the Ogallala gave him the welcome hand and told him he was fit to be a chief. Look, Co-ka-bi-ya-ya! What is it in the white boy's war-bonnet? What does my uncle see there?"

"An eagle feather," the big war-chief replied with curiosity in his tone.

"It is the feather of Red Cloud," the Indian boy replied. "The chief of the Ogallala himself gave it to my brother and bade him show it as a pledge and a defence when he might come among the Dakotas, agency and hostile alike. Does Red Cloud the Ogallala give the eagle feather — his, from his own head — to a thief or a spy? Answer me, Son of the Elk!"

"Surely not!" the puzzled fighter answered. "But why does Big Tooth wear the eagle feather of the Ogallala? Why did Red Cloud give his own crest plume to the white boy?"

"Listen; I will tell my uncle why," Young Wolf made answer. And then eloquently and effectively the Indian boy told the story of his rescue, when, "among the bad hearts of the big village of the white man" Jack Huntingdon saved him from torture and disgrace.

Chief Gall listened intently. Then a great smile covered his massive face. He came toward Jack with both hands extended, and on his lips the Indian's one stock English phrase:

"Heap good. How!"

You can always tell an honest smile. Jack could in this instance, and he met the Indian chief half way. Springing forward he grasped the proffered

hand of Gall with a most appreciative smile and answered with his most emphatic "How!" It was no wonder he smiled and emphasized. He had found a friend in camp.

"Shall the medicine chief stake out him who saved an Elk?" demanded Young Wolf, slyly. And his uncle, the war-chief, answered hotly: "Not while Co-ka-bi-ya-ya stands by, though all the Strong Hearts of the Uncapapas drove the staking-pins."

"Then tell their Master so, for To-tan-ka has sworn it," persisted Young Wolf.

"It is easy to make a boast. But those who boast the loudest do not always make the *coup*," was Gall's response. Then he turned angrily upon his rival: "Who is chief of the Uncapapas—To-tan-ka-i-yo-ta-ke, or Co-ka-bi-ya-ya—whom men call Pi-zi? I say the Fox shall not lay hand on the Elk. I say the white boy goes free."

"And To-tan-ka says the same," Sitting Bull replied. "Pi-zi is too hot toward his brother, who has made no foolish boast, but has done only as the medicine talked. To-tan-ka has taken the white boy's hand; he has given the sign of peace; he has the white boy's promise. Big Tooth is honest though all his lodge-folk be thieves. Big Tooth is a brave; his heart is good; he will keep his promise."

And Jack felt, as Po-to-sha-sha interpreted the

medicine chief's words, as though the scar-faced chief had indeed experienced a change of heart, and that he should go to him for a " recommend."

But Gall listened uncertainly. He evidently had not so much faith in the medicine chief's eulogium.

" What is the promise ? " he asked.

" To bear the message of To-tan-ka, the Uncapapa, to the Great Father in Washington and another to Long Hair, the chief of the Long-Swords of the white men, and to bring the answers here, to To-tan-ka."

" And what is the message ? "

" That is To-tan-ka's affair," Sitting Bull replied. " But, that there may be only good between the Elk and the Fox, To-tan-ka will tell the message to Pi-zi; though he need not. The white boy is to tell the Great Father at Washington—he who was once the Great White Chief of the Long-Swords in the big fight of the brothers—that the Dakotas will never sell their lands to the white man; he is to tell him to keep from the lands of the Dakotas the gold-thieves and the Long-Swords; and he is to bring from the Great Father his answer—will he or will he not do this?—yes or no. And to the Chief Long Hair the white boy is to say that To-tan-ka, the Uncapapa, and his Strong Hearts wait here in the Dakotas' land to meet him and fight him and his Long-Swords, man to man, like braves in battle; and the boy is to bring the Long Hair's answer—yes or no."

"Why all this talk over nothing, Young Wolf?" demanded Gall, when Sitting Bull had concluded. "To-tan-ka's words are wise. Why did not Young Wolf say all this at the start? It is good. And will the white boy keep his promise?"

"If he makes a promise, he keeps it," replied Young Wolf confidently. "Big Tooth is a brave. But let the Bull tell it all. His tongue halts in his story."

"Then there is more?" said Gall, his curiosity rising again. "What more? Will my brother tell me?"

"Surely," Sitting Bull replied with a nod. But before he could speak Young Wolf "cut in" and reported the alternative the medicine chief had offered Jack.

"Hear me!" he said; "If the white boy brings a good answer to To-tan-ka," the young Indian told his uncle, "he becomes a Strong Heart, like the brave he is; but if he bears a bad answer, he dies by the staking-out. And the white boy promised; because, if he would not, To-tan-ka swore that he, To-tan-ka—the brave To-tan-ka!—would here, on this spot, now, stake out first Young Wolf, the friend of Big Tooth, and then Big Tooth himself. What could a boy do but promise? And know this, my uncle, Son of the Elk, Big Tooth promised, not because he was afraid

for himself, but that no harm should come because of him to Young Wolf, his friend. To-tan-ka gave the boy no choice; what could he do but promise?"

"It is an unjust promise. It shall not stand. Would To-tan-ka make dogs and skulking coyotes of us all?" Chief Gall cried indignantly. "It shall not stand. I, Pi-zi,—I, Co-ka-bi-ya-ya, Chief of the Uncapapas,—say it shall not stand."

"And I, To-tan-ka-i-yo-ta-ke, Master of the Strong Hearts, say it shall be as I have spoken," Sitting Bull burst out in anger. "Who is leader here—Pi-zi the Elk, or To-tan-ka the Fox? I am Master of the Strong Hearts. Here stand my brothers ready to do as I bid them. Did the Son of the Elk ever know a brother of the Fox to set his hand to a thing and then give it up? It shall be as I say. Bid the white boy speak again, Po-to-sha-sha, the promise he has made."

"Hold back!" Chief Gall waved a hand in denial and command at the squaw-man. Then he faced the little circle of Strong Hearts. "My brothers," he said, "will you do this unjust thing? See; I am the war-chief of the Uncapapas, Co-ka-bi-ya-ya—he who fights among you. I hate the white man, and I would drive back the Me-ne-aska and the Long-Swords—or kill them where they stand. But my heart is not bad; I will make no good ways by bad ways. Nor shall you. You are my brothers;

but hear this: if the Strong Hearts lay hands on Young Wolf, the grandson of the Great Elk, or upon the white boy, Big Tooth, his blood-brother, then must they first deal with me—Pi-zi, as you call me—Gall, the surly one. Would you stake me out too? You must first do that before you touch these young braves—one your brother, the other your guest. When did an Uncapapa ever break hospitality? What is the law of the Dakotas?"

And from the little circle of half-naked warriors—those Bedouin of the Western plains, the fierce but never unjust Horse Indians of the Sioux—came the answer:

"Let the lodges hear. Let the Ni-ka-ga-hi, the elders, decide. We put no stakes to the limbs of the war-chief. We touch no torture-fire to the sons of the Elk. Let the elders decide whether the white boy, friend of the Elks, must keep an extorted promise."

Sitting Bull scowled at his protesting followers. But Gall responded: "It is well. See, yonder, in the Valley of the Greasy Grass are the lodges of the Uncapapas. Let us go there, my brothers; and there shall the chiefs and elders decide in council. The white boy is willing to take the message. If he is honest he will do so. Is not that enough?"

Sitting Bull was shrewd and politic. He saw that he was, for the present, in the minority. He had

not reckoned on the coming of the masterful Gall. He saw that craft must win rather than force. He waved his hand in apparent surrender.

"It is well," he said. "Let the Ni-ka-ga-hi decide in council. But the boy has promised."

"Have you promised, boy?" demanded Gall, turning now to Jack. "Ask him what he says, Po-to-sha-sha."

"What do you say, boy?" said the squaw-man. "The war-chief asks, have you promised, and will you keep your word?"

"I said I would see the President, and that I would try to find General Custer," Jack replied. "I will take the messages. I am no liar. I have learned from George Washington never to tell a lie, and I never do."

"Good for you, sonny. Stick to your promise—now, at any rate," said the renegade enthusiastically. And then, for the waiting warriors, he interpreted Jack's resolve.

Again Chief Gall shook the white boy's hand. Again he said his one English phrase.

"Heap good!" he said. "How!"

And Jack Huntingdon knew by the warm handclasp of the big war-chief that here, in the hostile land of the Sioux, he had really found a friend.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOAST OF RAIN-IN-THE-FACE.

THROUGH a fair, wide valley, flanked with ash-colored bluffs, all cut and scarred with ravines and gullies, and overlooked by broken hill ranges, ran a winding, shallow mountain stream. Lofty cottonwoods and low bull-berry thickets bordered its banks, while the whole beautiful valley, broken here and there by clumps of timber, was radiant with gorgeous wild flowers or sheeny with waving grass. Bunched together near the river-bank rose the cone-like tepees of an Indian encampment noisy with the sounds and signs of Indian life—shouting children, yelping dogs, whinnying ponies, shrill-voiced squaws. It was the camp of the hostiles of the Uncapapa Sioux in the Valley of the Greasy Grass, better known to us as the Little Big Horn.

To-day, you can drop from your comfortable, roomy parlor-car at Billings, on the Northern Pacific Railway, and gallop across county, or, transferring into another train, you can whizz down the Burlington road across the forty miles of broken uplands that lie between the Yellowstone River and

the fertile Valley of the Greasy Grass. But in 1875 the "fire-boat that walks on mountains," as the Sioux boys learned to call the locomotive, had not come within hundreds of miles of that now historic valley, and only those few favored red-skinned councillors who had gone East at government expense knew the wonderful railway train.

The Valley of the Greasy Grass had been a favorite camping-spot and happy hunting-ground for the all-conquering Sioux ever since they had driven from that hill-locked land its former occupants, the homesick Crows, who to-day, by the revenges of time and the favor of the United States, live a peaceful life upon these very lands from which their fathers were driven years and years ago.

But for generations the Sioux held the land as their own. Their skin-walled tepees were in every valley, and the smoke of their lodge-fires rose from just such lovely spots as this which Jack Huntingdon saw, as, firm in his saddle, he climbed the last of the bluffs, and from its dun-colored ridge looked down upon the verdant valley at his feet.

In spite of his frequent worrying over what Uncle Jerry would think about it all, Jack's ride across country from the Devils' Tower had been a pleasant one. Half-captive and half-guest, his Indian companions had proved friendly captors; for Young Wolf's story of what this white boy had done for

him in his time of stress had strongly appealed to the Indian love of courage and pluck. From "hows" and hand-shakes they had progressed to attention and entertainment, equally varied and interesting; and when they discovered that Jack was neither Long-Sword nor stone-hammerer,—neither soldier nor mining prospector,—but just a plain, every-day white boy, out for curiosity and a holiday, they threw all suspicion aside and welcomed him as friend and comrade.

Even Sitting Bull waxed friendly, and, through Po-to-sha-sha, held frequent conversations with the boy as to Eastern ways and methods, until Jack at last awoke to the fact that he was being shrewdly interviewed by this chief of schemers, and at once, with the mischievous spirit of a true Yankee boy, gave to the chief a "boast" that would have done credit to an Indian warrior himself.

Gall and Young Wolf were, however, Jack's especial intimates. He trusted them implicitly and counted upon them as his main reliance, though he had much to say to Po-to-sha-sha. The squaw-man, in his dual character of interpreter and fellow-countryman, kept ever near the white boy, whom he evidently admired for that very pluck and push which this dispirited renegade seemed utterly to lack.

"There you are, sonny," said the squaw-man as the two reined in their ponies on the clay ridge that

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overhung the valley. "That 's the village—forty lodges of Uncapapas, all of 'em Sitting Bull's own followers. My tepee is somewhere thereaway, down by the river. Hold on a minute. P'r'aps we can see my squaw—Mi-mi-te-ga—the moon we see—that 's her name. Pretty good woman, too, is Mi-mi, if she is an Injun. I 've known lots worse out East where I came from."

"Whereabouts East did you come from, Red Top?" Jack inquired, divided between curiosity as to the renegade's story and equal curiosity as to the village in the valley upon which he was gazing.

The squaw-man, as usual, evaded the question.

"See! there 's a party just in from a hunt," he said, pointing at a group of riders who had evidently caused the commotion in the camp. "Good luck, too, they 've had. There 's buffalo meat and bear's meat and deer meat. You 'll live like a prince, sonny, down there in the lodge. And just you keep a stiff upper lip, too. You 've got the war-chief on your side, even though only a few of his own lodge-folks are here. You can bluff 'em off, I reckon, if you don't show the white feather. Red Cloud's eagle feather is the best thing for you to show," and the squaw-man went off into a series of chuckles over his own impromptu joke, ending with a shrill whoop of announcement that drew the attention of the aroused village, and was answered by

the shrill staccato of yells of welcome from every boy and squaw and dog in the camp.

Then they rode down into the valley. But when the white boy was seen among the warriors, a mob of boys and squaws and a few overzealous bucks at once stampeded in his direction, believing him to be a prisoner destined for the gauntlet or the torture-stake.

Young Wolf sprang to his friend's side, Gall flung up his hand in the peace sign, and Sitting Bull waved back the encircling throng.

"The white boy comes as the guest of the lodges," he shouted—so Po-to-sha-sha explained to Jack later. "Show him that the Uncapapas can be loving and friendly to the blood-brother of Young Wolf and the comrade of the Strong Hearts."

At once Indian hostility changed to hospitality, and Jack, unused to the red-man's ways, was almost ready to declare that one was as burdensome as the other. He ate and he smoked and he "how'd" until he was stuffed and blinded and hoarse; he made the rounds of the village with Young Wolf as a special escort, while Po-to-sha-sha did the honors of the camp.

On every possible occasion the squaw-man would repeat the story of how the white boy had saved the Indian boy from ignominious insult in the streets of the East Side, and as, to the Indian, insult is the

depth of ignominy, this deed of Jack's placed him quite at the pinnacle of popularity. As he expressed it, when telling his adventures at home, "Why, say! there was n't anything too good for Jack Huntingdon in that village. The whole camp was his just for the asking."

But while the young braves and the best society of the Uncapapa lodges were making a lion of Jack, the chiefs in council were debating the point at issue touching the fate of the white boy should he return with his answers. There were some doubts expressed whether he would come at all when once he was set free; but on this point both Sitting Bull and Chief Gall were agreed. The politician and the warrior alike had "sized up" the white boy, and of one thing they were convinced—his truthfulness and sense of honor.

So the matter settled down to the penalty of failure. Then Gall insisted that, as he was interested in this matter because of his obligations to the boy who had saved his kinsman from dishonor, his own lodge-people were equally interested. He demanded therefore that the case should be considered by a joint council of both lodge-fires—his own, farther down the valley, as well as those of Sitting Bull's village.

Against his will, but largely because he found himself in the minority by reason of Jack's popularity,

Sitting Bull agreed to Gall's plan. He knew that in time he could upset this momentary popularity with a good bit of dreaming and medicine talk.

So the matter was arranged, and a runner was sent to summon the Ni-ka-ga-hi, or head chiefs of the other Uncapapa villages, to meet their brothers in council.

All this Po-to-sha-sha explained to Jack as they sat beneath the great cottonwoods watching the Indian boys at an exciting match game of "mud and willow fight"—thirty on a side—and especially arranged for Jack's benefit.

No healthy boy ever frets much over futures. He lives largely in the present. The result of his mission, Jack felt, was months away, and plenty of things might happen before the time came around. So he did not worry about it, but enjoyed himself as he was wont to enjoy himself amid agreeable or novel surroundings.

Indeed, he took so little interest in the meeting of the Ni-ka-ga-hi and what the chiefs might decide, that he went off with some of the Strong Hearts and Young Wolf on a bear hunt above the valley, in the foot-hills of the Little Chetish Mountains.

Hunting the grizzly in his lair, under the guidance of such experienced and seasoned hunters, Jack found to be great sport, for, with true Indian courtesy, they gave their white guest the honor of

the finishing shot. So Jack returned from the hunt in high feather, as might be expected of a boy who had killed his first grizzly; and when the hunters had deprived the big bear of his summer coat of brindled brown, and had parted the carcass, they cut off the great beast's cruel paws and hung them about Jack's neck as a trophy.

But Po-to-sha-sha thrust into the boy's hand something smaller and more delicately furry.

"Take it," he said; "it 's for luck; it 's a weasel's tail. Bears' claws ain't always to be depended on; but for straight out, sartin sure luck, there ain't nothing better 'n a weasel's tail. With that in your clothes, sonny, you ought to get a good decide out of the chiefs."

The decision was rendered when the hunters returned. Standing before the sacred tent, to which the *wa-than*, or leader of the hunt, conducted him, Jack stood before the six principal chiefs — the Ni-ka-ga-hi of the two villages—while Sitting Bull announced the verdict, and Po-to-sha-sha interpreted it. And, still loyal, Young Wolf stood close beside his friend.

"The chief says, boy," the squaw-man announced, "that the council says as how a promise is a promise, and that yours must stand. If you bring back an answer that is good, no harm shall come to you. You shall be free to go back to your

own people, or stay here among the Uncapapas and be a Strong Heart. But if the answer you bring to the chief is bad, then, so the council judge, what is said, is said. It shall be done to you as the chief decides. But, because you did good to their brother, Young Wolf, they say there shall be no staking out. The chief must give you a chance for your life—and say, sonny," the squaw-man interpolated hurriedly, " that means running the gauntlet. Don't you take any chances on that. The Bull is foxy; you hear me." Then he went on: " the chief says no harm shall be done to Young Wolf if you come back; but if you do not keep your promise, then must he suffer in your stead."

Here Jack gripped hard the hand of his Indian friend, and as Po-to-sha-sha concluded with the query, " Does your promise still bind you, the chiefs ask ? " he stood erect and defiant.

" I have promised, have n't I ? " he demanded. " What I say I 'll do, I 'll do. Does that satisfy you ? "

Evidently it did. For the approving grunts and " hows " that greeted his assertion showed the boy that he had won the good opinion of his savage hosts, who were his captors, too.

But even as this point was reached, and Jack felt relieved that the ordeal was over, there came a new surprise. A long whoop, twice repeated, and closing

each time with the double yelp of the fox, rang through the village, and straight between the lodges and up to the sacred tent darted the figure of a running Indian.

For the instant Jack was deserted for the newcomer, about whom clustered a throng in welcome, filling the air with the shout: "Ite-o-ma-ga-ju! Ite-o-ma-ga-ju!"

The newcomer halted for a moment, panting as one who has run far and fast. But in an instant he caught sight of the white boy standing alone before the sacred tent. With a whoop and a bound he burst through the crowd, and flinging himself upon poor Jack would have strangled him where he stood had not the watchful Young Wolf caught the assailant's hands away and thrown him aside, while the chiefs of the tribe thrust themselves between this human whirlwind and his victim.

The newcomer was a big fellow every way, tall and stocky, with strongly marked features and a cruel, pitiless eye. He was naked to the waist, wearing only a pair of old army trousers, belted about with a strip of army blanket. A handcuff, from which dangled a broken chain, was on his right wrist; his hair was loose and disordered, and bore no feather of hawk or eagle to denote his rank as chief. He looked at Jack an instant in anger, then, breaking loose, he strode as near to the boy as the

interposing chiefs allowed, and facing the people, struck himself twice over the heart, swelled out as with pride, and repeated loudly: "Sha-te su-ta! Sha-te su-ta! Ite-o-ma-ga-ju!"

By this time the ever faithful Po-to-sha-sha, seeing that it was safe to come out of hiding and stand nearer Jack, sidled to the white boy's elbow and whispered:

"I vum! sonny, I thought you were done for. It 's Rain-in-the-Face. He 's a bad one. He 's been in jail at the Agency all winter. He must have broke loose."

"What did he do?" queried Jack.

"Killed two soldiers—officers—just for a dare, you know. I reckon he hates all white folks like pizen."

"What 's he saying?" asked Jack.

"He 's making a boast," the squaw-man replied. "When he hammered himself he said, 'I 'm a Strong Heart. I 'm Rain-in-the-Face!' As if one did n't know it! But that 's just like him. He 's a big boaster. Hold on now, and I 'll tell you what he says. He 's getting ready for a big boast."

That was evidently the intention of Rain-in-the-Face. Three times he strode up and down before the people; three times he announced himself as a Strong Heart and as Rain-in-the-Face. Then he lifted his voice in the "boast," which the squaw-man rendered into English for Jack.

"I am a Strong Heart! I am To-ki-cu-ra, the enemy-catcher; I am Ite-o-ma-ga-ju, Rain-in-the-Face. You know me. I am bad, a fighter, a hunter. The girls dared me to kill a white man and bring his buttons back; I killed two. Chief Long Hair shot at me, but I brought the brass buttons away, and gave them to the girl who dared me. All the tribe knows it. Then, last winter, at the Agency store, Little Hair ['That 's Cap'n Tom Custer, the General's brother, you know, the General he 's long hair,' Po-to-sha-sha explained] caught me like a squaw when my back was turned, threw me into a sick-wagon [that 's an ambulance, sonny], and put me in jail, chained to a white man with this"—he held aloft his handcuff and the dangling links of chain. "They gave me old clothes of the Long-Swords; they kept me in a room all winter, where the snow blew in and I was cold. It made my heart bad. I told Little Hair I would get out some day, and I did. The white man and I got away; they chased us; they shot at us; but we hid in the brush. The white man cut our chain; he was caught; but I am free. I told Little Hair I would cut his heart out and eat it. I will; I will. I am a Strong Heart; and a Strong Heart always keeps his vow. My day will come. I am Rain-in-the-Face. I am a brave. The Long Swords tremble when I am near; the

Rees and the Crows feel of their heads every day when I am by, to see if their scalps are on. I am a brave. I would rather fight than eat. The Uncapapas know it. Why is this white boy here? Ugh! I will kill him to keep my hand in practice until I take the scalp of Long Hair and eat the heart of Little Hair. Hear me! I am Rain-in-the Face!"

"Whew!" said Jack, as the Indian fire-eater concluded, and, wearied with his long run from captivity and his vociferous boast, sank listlessly to the ground. Then the young bucks, who evidently admired him, raised him and bore him off to one of the lodges. But even as he went he threw across his shoulder a look of hatred and defiance toward Jack, and shouted again, "Sha-te su-ta! Ite-o-ma-ga-ju!" while his friends applauded loudly, and Jack felt that his own popularity was in peril.

Evidently Chief Gall and Young Wolf felt this too. For they hurried the white boy off to their own lodge farther down the valley and there made inquiries of all the runners and scouts of the tribe as to the whereabouts of the expedition which Jack had lost.

Next morning the word came that the expedition had been located in the very spot among the Black Hills where Jack had lost himself—the western slope of Inyan Kara.

With Young Wolf and two trusty guides to show

him the way, Jack was hustled off to the south to rejoin his uncle and the expedition.

But ere he went, Po-to-sha-sha came down the river trail with a message from Sitting Bull.

"The Bull says as how he trusts you, sonny. He says 'How!' and tells you to git; because Rain-in-the-Face is acting bad about you, and the Bull's afraid he can't hold in his young men much longer. Popularity, you see, don't last long here, when there 's fellows like Rain-in-the-Face to break jail and take it away. You 'd better go."

"Won't you come with me, Red Top?" Jack inquired suddenly. "Don't you want to come back East to civilization—and home?"

The squaw-man looked at Jack with a frightened, startled expression in his weak and shifty eyes.

"Home? No, no, no. This is my home," he said. "No East for me, sonny. I 'll never go back. But don't you come back here. Do you hear? Don't you come back. Just you stay away if you know what 's best for you. I am an Injun. And Injuns is pizen. Look out for us."

With that he turned hastily on his heel, and left without a good-bye. But before he had gone a hundred yards he was back again.

"Say, sonny, I come near forgetting," he said. "Rain-in-the-Face knows you 're going. Oh yes, he does. He 's just as foxy and tonguey as the

Bull himself. And he sends you this. 'Tell the white boy to give it to Little Hair,' he said to me. 'Tell Little Hair I don't forget my vow.' Here it is. Don't you ever give it up, sonny; just frame it. Don't you ever come back. There; you 're a good fellow. So long."

And with one quick hand-shake the squaw-man was off. But Jack Huntingdon turned to the message that Rain-in-the-Face had entrusted to him and read its language at once.

It was a piece of buffalo-skin, on which the vindictive Indian had drawn in red ground paint a crude but easily read design. It was a bloody heart.

Evidently Rain-in-the-Face had not forgotten his vow against gallant Captain Tom Custer, the brother of the General.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW JACK MET THE GREAT WHITE CHIEF.

SUMMER had grown to autumn, autumn to winter, and Jack Huntingdon was at school again, plodding along in the same uneventful routine that had set him to grumbling at the humdrum life of overgrown New York, that very day—it seemed ages ago—on which he had first met and assisted Young Wolf the Uncapapa in the battle with the street boys of the East side.

But, however it may have seemed, life was not really the same. Jack Huntingdon had a story to tell; Jack Huntingdon had met with adventures; and you may be sure he was a hero to his schoolmates, and a hero to his street-mates, too, with just enough prestige because of his experiences among the Indians to outrank and outclass every other boy in his set. For, you see, Jack did get home safe and sound after all.

As for Uncle Jerry, he had, of course, been greatly distressed over Jack's disappearance; he had taken himself to task for permitting the boy to wander out of his sight, and had scolded Jack

roundly when uncle and nephew were safely reunited at the camp of the explorers under Inyan Kara. But all the same it must be said of Uncle Jerry that he had in his own quiet nature a touch of the adventurous, and his delight in Jack's pluck and independence quite overshadowed his censure of the lad's heedlessness. This led him first to excuse and then to admire the presence of mind of his adventurous nephew, and quite took all the snap and sting out of the scolding.

At all events, Jack did not receive what the English boys call the " wigging " he had expected from Uncle Jerry when, escorted by Iron Cedar, Young Wolf, and Little Eagle, the boy " showed up " in camp, as Sergeant Thompson had declared he would.

Even at home, where he arrived a month later, his escapade took to itself, in time, something of a halo, and when, in the spring vacation of the next year, he received an invitation from Uncle Jerry to spend a week with him in Washington, where he was at work on some special researches in the Smithsonian Institution, permission was granted much more readily than Jack had anticipated, and he was soon happily settled at the capital for his week's visit to Uncle Jerry.

He enjoyed it all immensely. He poked about the city—still full of war memories and war relics,

and just then entering upon its era of transformation from a rather unsightly border town to the grand and imposing official city it is to-day. He went everywhere, saw everything, and was forever on the go, sometimes under Uncle Jerry's guidance, but more frequently on his own hook. For, as Uncle Jerry told him, "You know a thing or two, Jack; you 'll know more if you keep at it; and one thing is certain—you do know how to take care of yourself, and I guess I won't interfere."

Twice Jack went to the public receptions at the White House, shaking hands with the President—the Great White Chief, as Sitting Bull had called the foremost soldier of the century—the Great Father, as all the red Indians of America were accustomed to call the President of the United States.

Jack found himself thinking of these things as he leaned against one of the pillars in the great East Room of the White House watching the people file slowly past to take the hand of Grant, that simple silent man, "our dragon-slayer" as James Russell Lowell called him—the man whom the Republic cheered and honored then, whom to-day the Republic reveres and immortalizes.

And then Jack remembered the message with which Sitting Bull had charged him. To be sure he had often remembered it during his quiet winter at school; but as he had never been able to see just

how he could bring about its deliverance, he had put the duty aside as one he was pledged to perform—some day—if ever he could see the President.

And now he stood looking at the President—quite within talking distance of him. Jack was tempted to fall in line again for another hand-shake, and then and there deliver himself of his message from the Sioux. But an instant's reflection convinced him that this would be neither wise nor proper. He must bide his time. Perhaps Uncle Jerry would get him a special audience with President Grant. He did n't know just how; for Uncle Jerry, if the truth must be told, ridiculed Jack's "Regulus act," as he termed his promise to return an answer to his Sioux captor, and held that compulsion cancelled a promise, and that it was not wise to keep faith with a savage.

That was where he and Jack differed, so the boy did not put much confidence in Uncle Jerry's bringing about that audience with the President. He 'd take the chances anyhow, he assured himself, and wait his opportunity to speak.

The opportunity came much sooner than Master Jack expected. For, the very next morning after his visit to the White House, Jack Huntingdon stood before a jeweller's window on Pennsylvania Avenue, studying the tempting array of "souvenirs of Washington" therein displayed, and trying to

make up his mind which one he should select to take home to his mother. As he stood thus, lost in thought, he became aware of another investigator standing beside him, and glancing up he was surprised into open-mouthed wonder to recognize at his elbow—the President!

Indeed it was. For that most democratic of all our Chief Magistrates had a way of leisurely walking the streets of Washington smoking his cigar, studying the pictures and photographs, and investigating the shop-windows. For Ulysses S. Grant loved to be independent. He hated all the fuss and flummery that would hedge the head of a nation, and liked to go about like any simple citizen, free from the annoyance of body-guard or "chaperon."

But Jack, who did not know all this, was struck mute with surprise for an instant, and stood, open-mouthed, staring so fixedly at the President, that the General's eye fell on that upturned, boyish face, and a smile played about the great soldier's bearded lips as he noted the boy's intensity, and appreciated the humor of the situation.

He nodded pleasantly.

"Some cute things in the window there, eh, my boy?" he said.

But Jack had no eyes for the window display.

"Is n't this the—the President—President Grant, sir?" he asked, brokenly.

" I reckon it is, my son," the President replied; and then he offered Jack his hand. For General Grant liked boys and girls. His love for his own children amounted almost to a passion; and in all the boys and girls of America he recognized the future of the Republic. Then, too, they interested him. As a rule, they had no favors to ask nor suggestions to offer, and he always felt drawn towards boys who seemed to be bright, intelligent, and promising.

This boy certainly did; and therefore the President offered him his hand.

" What 's your name and where do you hail from ? " he inquired.

" Jack Huntingdon, sir; I live in New York," Jack replied, grasping the President's hand cordially. His opportunity had come.

" Mr. President—General," he said, " I have a message for you."

The President grew suspicious at once. He dropped the boy's hand abruptly. A message so often covered a request that he almost looked upon young Jack as an office-seeker in disguise.

" What 's your message ? " he said brusquely. " Who 's it from ? "

" It 's from Sitting Bull, sir," Jack responded promptly.

It was now the President's turn to be surprised.

A boy from New York with a message from an Indian chief was certainly something novel.

"Sitting Bull!" he exclaimed. "What, the Sioux chief? Where under the sun did you get a message from him? When did you see him?"

"Last summer, sir," replied Jack, "out in the Black Hills. He gave me the choice of taking a message to you or being staked out. And I chose the message."

"Staked out?" queried the President. "What 's that?"

Jack explained.

"Well, well," exclaimed the wondering Chief Magistrate. "That does n't sound right pleasant, that 's a fact. I don't wonder you decided to take the message—even to me! What is it? Or, hold on. This is rather too public a place to receive an embassy. And I 've got to go, anyhow. Come and see me at the White House at three o'clock to-day, Jack. I 'll be at leisure then, and we 'll talk over that message. I may have to stake you out as an envoy of the hostiles."

He wrote hurriedly on the back of a visiting card.

"Here! hand that to the doorkeeper, Jack," he said. "He 'll let you see me at once. At three this afternoon, remember."

And then he was gone.

But Jack stood transfixed. An appointment with the President! At last he could keep his promise.

"Say, Johnny, was n't that President Grant? What did he write on the card—his autograph? I 'll give you a dollar for it."

Jack looked up, and caught the eye of the omnipresent and ever-inquisitive tourist.

"No, thank you, sir," he said. "That card 's not for sale"; and then, for the first time, he read what was written upon it:

"Admit the bearer to see the President at 3 P.M. —U. S. GRANT."

Jack could hardly wait for the time to come. But he strolled down to the unfinished Washington Monument on the Potomac flats—somehow, he said, it always made him think of the Devil's Tower in the Black Hills—"by contrast, I suppose," he always hastened to explain—and there he thought out what he would say.

At three that afternoon he stood at the main entrance-door of the White House, displayed his card, and was at once shown up the stairs to the President's room.

"Ah, my friend Jack, is it—the envoy of Sitting Bull?" said the President. "Well, let 's have your message, my son. But how in the world did you happen to get into his clutches?"

Jack told his story, in which the President was greatly interested. Then the boy delivered the message sent to the Great White Chief by the noted medicine chief of the Sioux.

"Well, well, Jack!" he cried, when the story and its "postscript" were completed, "that was an adventure, was n't it? How my boys would have enjoyed it! I don't know, though, as I 'd like to have them in quite such a tight place—not even Lieutenant Fred, and he was out there last year with Custer."

"I have a message for General Custer, too, Mr. President," Jack announced.

"H'm!"—the President's firm lips set in displeasure. "That 's more than I have, then," he said. And Jack wondered what he meant. "Well, what is it?"

Jack told the President of Sitting Bull's defiance to Custer.

"I reckon that 'll never come to pass—not this year, at any rate," said the President grimly. "You were a wise boy, though, Master Jack, to promise as you did," he added. "A promise under compulsion really can't stand, I reckon. Well, give my compliments to Mr. Bull—when you see him," he said with a laugh—"and tell him that the United States are bigger than the Sioux nation, and they 've made up their minds to have that whole Western

country, some day. Not even Sitting Bull, nor whoever is the Great Father here in Washington, can prevent that from coming about—no, sir! not a whole farmyard of bulls. We have n't always used the Indians right, Jack—that I 'll admit," the President continued. " I 'm for justice to them, every time; but that does n't mean that the biggest medicine man of the whole Sioux nation is going to gain anything by trying to bulldoze me."

And the President paused, quite innocent of the fact that he had made a pun; but Jack saw it, and never forgot it.

Evidently General Grant never expected that Jack Huntingdon would ever see Sitting Bull again, or venture into the Indian country. He had been interested in the boy's story, and, now that the message had been given and the promise kept, he felt that Jack had done his duty, though, with him, as with Uncle Jerry, compulsion barred out the necessity of performance. But he admired the boy for his pluck and because he had done what he considered to be his duty—as all Americans should. But, further, than that the President did not consider the question. Who would ?

Jack would—and did.

" General Grant," he said (for, somehow, Grant was always " General " to the hero-worshipping boys of those days), " is n't it a duty to keep a promise ? "

"Certainly it is, Jack," the President replied. "A promise is a solemn duty; and loyalty to a friend is as solemn. People find fault with me," he continued thoughtfully, "for sticking to my friends. What else should a man do?"

"That 's so," said Jack, as the President appeared to pause for an answer. "Seems to me it 's the only thing to do."

"But be careful about choosing your friends, my son," said the President. "Don't make a friend of one who is not worthy. In your case, now, with that young Indian—what 's his name?"

"Young Wolf, sir," Jack prompted.

"Yes, Young Wolf—well, he seems to have been, for an Indian, what they call out West a 'white man,'" and he laughed at the apparent anomaly.

Jack laughed too, but he said earnestly, "That 's just what he is, sir—white. He proved it."

"So it seems," the President responded. "And you stuck to him finely. So when you promised to bring that message to me, and, by that promise, saved Young Wolf as well as yourself from danger, you were certainly justified in making such a promise, and I must say that in keeping it you have shown yourself quite as manly. But then, I should know you would do such a thing, Jack, just to look at your face. It 's an honest face. I like you for

your loyalty to your friend. I honor you for your fidelity to your trust."

"I 'm glad you think so, sir," murmured gratified Jack.

"Be as true to all your duties," the President continued, "and you will be just the kind of a man the Republic will need—when you become a citizen. Do your duty, Jack, no matter what happens,—always do your duty. And remember that your country demands your highest service, and should receive it, unquestioningly. The first duty of a soldier is obedience; the first duty of a citizen is loyalty."

The President rose.

"Good-bye, Jack," he said pleasantly, holding out his hand. "And remember what I said,—if you ever should see Mr. Sitting Bull again, my compliments to him, and tell him to watch out for himself—when you see him."

Still laughing, he gave Jack a cordial hand-clasp and a cheery farewell, never thinking that Jack's promise was a double one, and that the boy's duty, as he saw it, was twofold. But Jack Huntingdon took the President's advice to cover all contingencies, and, while flattered at the attention shown him, he was doubly strengthened in his resolve to carry out his full promise to Sitting Bull—some day, somehow.

As the messenger, in response to the President's summons, entered to show Jack out, he handed the President a card.

"Is there any answer, Mr. President?" he inquired. "The General has been waiting some time."

The President glanced at the card.

"I will not see him," he answered determinedly. "You can tell him so."

Jack passed from the room with these words in his ears, the attendant following. In the anteroom, as the boy paused to look for his hat, which he had left there, he noticed a tall, slim, wiry, and military-looking man, with a blond mustache and close-cropped hair.

The gentleman seemed restless; he looked anxious and worried, and at once approached the messenger who had come with Jack from the President's room.

"Well, is he at leisure now?" he asked.

"I am sorry, General," said the messenger, returning the visitor's card, "but the President is busy. He says he cannot see you."

An exclamation of vexation and disappointment escaped from the tall soldier's lips.

"Cannot?" he demanded.

"Excuse me, he will not, sir," replied the messenger; "he says he will not see you."

"Poor man," thought Jack, "I 'm luckier than

he is. I wonder who he is," he mused in curiosity as he passed into the outer hall; "some office-seeker, I suppose."

Now Jack Huntingdon hated to see any one disappointed — especially when he himself had been gratified in his desires. He glanced again at the worried-looking soldier, who, though he spoke no word, seemed almost dazed by his disappointment. He wondered again why he was there, and what he wanted from the President.

On the spur of the moment, as was his wont, Jack gave his curiosity expression.

"Who is that gentleman?" he asked the doorkeeper, indicating with a nod of inquiry the tall, close-cropped soldier, who still stood fingering his card.

The doorkeeper followed the boy's inquiring nod.

"That? Why, that 's General Custer," was the startling reply.

And then he closed the door.

CHAPTER IX.

"THE WHITE CHIEF WITH YELLOW HAIR."

GENERAL CUSTER!

Jack halted at the head of the staircase, unwilling to believe his ears.

That worried-looking man the dashing Custer, under whom his father had fought in the Valley? That disappointed man, whom Grant—his old general—would not see, Sheridan's favorite and the army's idol? That short-haired, close-cropped man "the White Chief with Yellow Hair"—the "Chief Long Hair" of the Indians, who so feared him?

"It cannot be. There must be another General Custer," Jack declared as he went slowly down the stairs and out under the great *porte-cochère* of the White House. "If it had been my General Custer, the President would have had me see him, and let me give him Sitting Bull's message," he reasoned.

And yet—he was sure there was but one General Custer. He must see him. True, the General seemed worried about his own affairs—something that evidently concerned himself and annoyed

the President—but, with a boy, personal concerns usually take precedence.

Jack halted half-way down the driveway that swings around to the great gate; then, turning, he retraced his steps just in time to meet the tall man coming down the walk, with shadowed face and quick nervous steps.

Jack lifted his hat politely.

"Excuse me," he said; "but is this General Custer?"

The soldier stopped short, looked at his questioner closely, and then replied, brusquely:

"Yes. What is it? No autographs to-day, my boy. I have n't time. I 'm in a hurry."

Jack would have smiled at the General's surmise had he not been equally in earnest.

"I don't want an autograph, sir," he said. "I have one of yours. My father gave it to me. He fought under you in the Valley."

"Is that so? What 's his name?" queried the General, with only half-arrested interest.

"Captain Huntingdon, sir," replied Jack.

"Not Cap'n Joe Huntingdon of the Third? No; is he?" The moody face lighted up at the mention. "Remember him? I reckon I do. Did he ever tell you how he rode with me at Woodstock Races?"

"Yes, sir," cried Jack, enthusiastically, "and how

you galloped out to the rebs, took off your big hat, and made 'em a sweeping bow before the fight—and then sailed in and licked 'em! He 's told me that often," added the boy, "only," looking up at the General critically, "he said you had long, yellow hair, sir."

The General laughed.

"Have to change the fashions sometimes, you know my boy. What 's your name?" he asked, suddenly.

"Jack, sir—Jack Huntingdon," the boy replied. "We live in New York now."

"Well, my regards to your father, Jack. I 'm glad to have met you," said the General, shaking the boy's hand and then striding off.

And Jack was so delighted with this opportunity to talk with his father's beloved general, that he quite forgot his own mission. But he remembered it in an instant and raced after the General.

"Oh, General, General Custer!" he panted. "I 'most forgot what I stopped you for. I have a message for you."

"Ah! from your father, Jack?" queried the General. "What is it?"

"No, sir, not from him," Jack replied, hastily. "It 's from Sitting Bull."

"Sitting Bull!" The General was as surprised as the President had been. "Why, what do you mean, boy? Where 's Sitting Bull?"

"I don't know, sir — out West, somewhere, I suppose," the boy replied, vaguely. "But you see, he caught me last summer, and would n't let me off until I had promised to take a message to you. I saw you just now in—the President's room, and I waited for you."

"O-ho; you were the boy I saw coming from the President's office, eh?" the General remarked. "You saw him, then. That 's better luck than I had, Jack."

"I know it, sir," said Jack, a bit too frankly. "I heard him say he would n't see you. Why?"

Custer flushed with vexation and sensitiveness.

"It 's unjust; it 's maddening!" he said half to himself. Then he turned to Jack with a nervous apology for a laugh. "You see, Jack, it 's a good deal with me and the President as it is in that poem that perhaps you 've seen in the papers:

> "'"'Cause things at home is crosswise and
> Betsey and I are out!'

I 've waited in that office since ten o'clock this morning—and, after all, the President would n't see me," he repeated sadly. "Don't you ever get mixed up with these politicians, Jack," he said, with a forced smile, "they 've killed many a good man before you and me."

"But President Grant 's no politician," Jack declared. I have heard my father say so."

"That 's right, he is n't," replied General Custer. "If he were, I 'd know what to do. But it 's because of the politicians that things have gone crosswise, as I told you, and the President and I are out. What did you want to see him about?"

"Why," replied Jack, "I had a message for him, too—from Sitting Bull."

"What?" cried the General. "Well, for gracious sake, boy, what are you—an envoy from Sitting Bull?"

"I seem to be a sort of a one, sir," Jack replied. "You see, I had to be; I could n't help myself."

The General hailed a carriage.

"Come, jump in, Jack, and ride down with me to Willard's," said the General. "I want to find General Sherman and close my matters up. And I want to hear your story, too. You can tell it as we ride along."

Jack followed the General into the carriage, and as they rattled down Pennsylvania Avenue he gave the message from Sitting Bull.

"We 'll have the message first," General Custer had said. "Then, if we have time, you can tell me how it came about. Business first and pleasure afterwards, you see. That 's the soldier's way."

And thus Jack Huntingdon kept his word.

"The old scamp!" exclaimed the General as

Jack concluded his message. "He 's out for blood, is he? Face to face, man to man, eh? Not much, Jack. That 's not Sitting Bull's way. He lets other folks do the fighting. He does the planning. He 's a shrewd old customer, though—and a hard one. I almost had him last year on the Yellowstone; but I will say he has a genius for stirring up a fuss and keeping out of trouble himself that is almost generalship—in its way. But how under the sun did you get that message, Jack? What were you doing away out there in the Sioux country?"

Jack explained. But the story was still unfinished when the carriage drew up at Willard's.

"Hullo! here we are," said the General; "I must drop you here, Jack. Or no,—wait for me in the hotel. If General Sherman is n't here yet, I can give you a few minutes while I wait. I want to hear the rest of that story. I 've known just such things happen before."

Jack accompanied the General into the busy hotel, where many nodded to the famous cavalryman, while others seemed to avoid him. The story of the President's displeasure had already gone abroad.

"General Sherman? Not back from New York yet, General," Jack heard the clerk say in response to Custer's inquiry.

Fretting and impatient, the baffled soldier turned

away, took Jack's arm, and drew him into a quiet corner.

"Everything seems to go against me to-day," he said. "I don't think I ever had anything worry me so. Come, drive ahead with that story, Jack. It will take my mind off my affairs."

So Jack told the story in detail. And when he got to the council of the chiefs at the Uncapapa village, he put his hand into his pocket and drew out his wallet.

"Here 's another message I was told to deliver, General," he said. "It is for your brother—the Injuns called him Little Hair."

"Oh, for Tom, eh? He 's out at the post," the General replied. "Why, you 're a regular walking despatch-box, Jack. What 's the old butcher sent Tom, eh? A bloody heart! Well, Tom will be delighted. I see the Bull seems to remember the Custer family. I 'll see to it that he has reason to."

"But this is not from him, sir; it 's from that wild Injun they call Rain-in-the-Face," Jack explained.

"Oh, that young murderer, eh?" said Custer. "I 'll have no mercy on him. He killed two of my most faithful non-combatants—the veterinary surgeon and the sutler—just for a boast. Yes, Tom caught him, I remember, and he broke jail last summer. I 'll see that Cap'n Tom Custer gets the

message, Jack. He can read its meaning, and he won't forget it, I can tell you that. Tom 's a whole team when he gets a-going."

"Are you really going to march against Sitting Bull, General?" queried Jack. "Oh, don't I wish I could go with you! When do you go?"

"When? Why, I was ready to go last month," Custer replied. "But somebody thought I knew something about the Belknap case — that 's the Secretary of War, you know, who has just been impeached for Indian ring frauds — and I was ordered to come on here and testify. I did n't know much, and what I did was only hearsay, and did n't amount to anything. But they kept me here just long enough to delay our expedition and give Sitting Bull a chance to get ready. And, worse than that, Belknap was a friend of the President; so of course General Grant thinks I was trying to get his friend into trouble. The General, you know, always stands by his friends."

"I know it, sir; he told me so," Jack replied. "But did n't he say, 'Let no guilty man escape'?"

"Yes, he did," the General replied. "But, all the same, he doesn't love the man that helps to prove his friend guilty. There you have the whole story, Jack. And now you can see why I 'm fretting over this thing. I don't know what it will lead to. If only the President would have seen me to-day, I

could have explained things and set everything right. But he would n't, and now I 'm all at sea."

" That 's hard lines, General," said sympathetic Jack. " But of course you 'll go on that expedition. They can't do anything without you, can they ? "

" Oh, they can, I suppose," replied Custer. " They 've made General Terry the head of the expedition now, and he 's a good leader, you know. I just have charge of my regiment, the Seventh Cavalry, you see. But it would break my heart to have the boys start without me. They sha'n't. If General Sherman don't get in here by six, I 'll leave on the seven-o'clock train for the West. I simply can't risk it to wait any longer. Sherman said I should go in command of my regiment, and I 'm going."

" Oh, can't I go with you, General, somehow ? " cried Jack. " I 'd just like to get out there once more and see an Injun campaign. That would be the best kind of a way to take my answers back to Sitting Bull, would n't it, sir ? "

" Good idea, Jack," said the General, patting the boy on the shoulder. " You 're a bright one. That 's the best sort of a way to keep your promise. It would be like that fellow in Scott's poem. Don't you know what he said ?—

"'When I come again,
I come with banner, brand, and bow,
As leader seeks his mortal foe;
For love-lorn swain in lady's bower
Ne'er panted for the appointed hour
As Jack, when there before him stand
This big Sioux chieftain and his band!'

We 'll change it to suit the occasion, Jack."

Jack was delighted.

"That 's from the *Lady of the Lake*, is n't it, General?" he said. "And it just fills the bill, does n't it? Do you suppose I could go, somehow?"

The General hesitated.

"I don't know, Jack," he said at last. "I 'd like to have you along first rate. Autie Reed 's going. He 's my nephew, and just about your age. Why, yes, I could fix it, if your father would trust you in my charge. I 'll appoint you and Autie herders. You two boys would just have to help drive the big herd of cattle that go with the column —for fresh meat, you know. It 's a rough life, but you 'd see the fun, Jack. How does that suit you?"

Suit him! Jack was wild to go. He could have hugged the General then and there if it had been allowable. Instead, he thanked him in a voice that fairly trembled with emotion and anxiety.

"What do you suppose your father would say, Jack?" the General said.

"Oh, if you really wanted me to go along, I don't believe he 'd have a word to say against it. I could tell him there would n't be any danger, could n't I ?" said Jack.

"Danger ? Among those red fellows ?" said Custer, contemptuously. "Why, it will just be a walk-over for us. Why, Jack, my boy, do you know—now, I 'm not making a boast, mind you, as those Injuns do, but this is a fact—I never yet met with a single disaster while in command of an important expedition, and I 've had more success in my Indian expeditions than any other officer in the regular army. That ought to satisfy your father, had n't it ? But see here, I 'll help you through. I 'll write a note to your father, now, right here, asking him to let you go with me, and telling him that I 'll give you an official position—an official position, Jack, as a civilian — 'assistant herder, Seventh U. S. Cavalry.' How does that strike you ?"

"It 's great!" was all that Jack could say. Enthusiasm and delight could go no farther.

The General beckoned Jack to follow him, went into the writing-room of the hotel, and there indited a brief but pungent letter to Jack's father, the ex-captain. It told of his delight in making the acquaintance of this bright and wide-awake son of his old comrade, expressed a desire to know the lad

better, and made an earnest request to be allowed to have the boy put under his charge, as the companion to his nephew, Autie Reed, in the brief Indian campaign in which the General's regiment was shortly to take part. It was such a letter as would gratify a father, delight an old comrade, and stand an even chance of receiving an affirmative answer.

Jack was sure that it would, and he thanked the General again and again for his friendliness and interest.

"Little bit of selfishness on my part, too, Jack," the General averred. "I 'd like to have a nice sort of a boy along to keep Autie Reed company. Autie 's a good fellow, and he 's as wild to go as you are. You 're a nice sort of a chap, too, and you 'll make a fine team. I 'm going to take my youngest brother, Boston Custer, along, too. He 's sick, and a campaign in that grand Western air will build him up wonderfully. But he 's older than you and Autie Reed—Autie 's named after me, you see—Armstrong—that 's what they call me at home—by my middle name, you know—George Armstrong Custer. I think if your father 'll let you go, Jack, it will be a good thing all around."

"Especially as it gives me just the chance I need to carry out my promise to Sitting Bull," Jack said, building upon that as a most important matter. "I

told those Injuns I always kept my promises, and never told a lie. They believed me; and I made up my mind that I would do my duty and get the answers back from you and the President. But I never said how I would get them back, and if I do it under escort, they can't harm me. I think it 's a grand way out, and I 'm sure that father will let me go, after he reads your letter, General."

"I hope so, Jack," the General answered. "When you do decide, write or telegraph me at Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota, and I 'll be on the lookout for you. But don't start until you get my telegram in reply. I want to be sure about my being there before I lead you off on a wild-goose chase."

"Of course you 'll be there, General," Jack exclaimed in some trepidation. He could not bear to think of failure. "They never would start without you. There is n't any one else fit to lead."

"Well, we 'll hope the President will think so too, Jack," the General replied. "Now I must go and see McCook. Then I 'll try to find General Sherman again, and then—'all aboard for the West!' Good-bye, Jack. Tell your father I want you to go. I 'll take good care of you, and, between us, I reckon we can get that answer to Sitting Bull, eh? Good-bye."

With a hand-shake and a smile he was gone, and

Jack walked down the avenue the happiest boy in Washington.

Uncle Jerry did not demur a particle at Jack's request. Instead, he openly favored it.

"I throw up the sponge, Jack," he said. "It 's your luck, or your pluck, I don't know which. Here you 've come to Washington, kept both your promises, and have got a chance to do your Regulus act, without the keg of nails ending."

Jack had looked up the Regulus story, and appreciated his uncle's simile.

"Any boy who can manage to corral the President and General Custer just where he wanted them, and on the same day, is able to take care of himself," he said. "Keep on, my son, in the way you are going, and you 'll be a man before we know it. You 'd better get home at once if this Western trip is to be on the programme. See here, I 'll send a note to your father telling him to let you go. Such a chance don't come to a boy twice in his lifetime—though it might to you, Jack. You're just that lucky. Get your traps together, and I 'll send you home on the night train. I think my letter and General Custer's ought to make an impression, don't you?"

Jack certainly did. Indeed, he felt so certain about it that he boarded the night train that very evening, and was soon speeding homeward full of hope and anticipation.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE SEVENTH MARCHED AWAY.

JACK HUNTINGDON had not reckoned without his host. He knew his father. The permission to "take the war-path," as the Captain called the plan, was, after due consideration, granted. General Custer's letter, his evident desire to favor the son of his old comrade, and his warm interest in Jack, added to the ex-soldier's own adventurous spirit and his wish to see his boy daring, plucky, and go-ahead, all combined to urge him to the decision he rendered, and before the week was out, Jack had telegraphed the General, advising him of his father's action.

"Father says I can go. Please say when I shall come," his telegram ran, and then, restless with anxiety, he awaited a reply.

The days passed, and it did not come. Meantime the papers were full of "the Custer trouble," and people took sides, some with Grant, some with Custer. It was all a most unfortunate affair.

That matter has, however, long since been sifted and settled. We know now that the great soldier-

president misunderstood and misjudged Custer; we know that the dashing cavalry leader, dispirited by this misjudgment, acted unwisely, and brought himself into such direct antagonism to his superiors that, for a time at least, he was deprived of his command, and very nearly placed under arrest; we know that his superiors quickly relented their harshness, appreciating Custer's value as an Indian-fighter and the inspiration his presence meant to his command; but we know, also, that the wound to his manly pride and womanly sensitiveness, both of which had part in his high sense of honor, rankled, affected him, and led him into an over-zeal that is now history.

All these things, of course, were not then known to Jack Huntingdon. He felt that his plans were being spoiled, that the strength of the expedition was being threatened, that injustice was being done to " my General," as he had taken to calling Custer, and that, if something did n't happen to change matters, that telegram would not come, and his hopes and spirits be equally dashed.

But on the eighth of May in that jubilee year of 1876, two days before the big " Centennial " opened in Philadelphia, Jack Huntingdon's hopes and spirits were suddenly revived by the receipt of this telegram:

" Report as herder to Fort Abraham Lincoln at once. Come by Bismarck.—CUSTER."

Jack's cap struck the ceiling, Jack's feet executed a war-dance, and Jack's voice found vent in a jubilant hurrah. The kit was packed, the good-byes said, and a week later Jack Huntingdon had "joined his command" at Fort Abraham Lincoln.

Across the muddy Missouri, on its western bank, stretched the low, white buildings of that once important, now abandoned post; and in the pleasant and well-appointed "General's room" at headquarters, Jack met his "companion-in-arms," Autie Reed.

That was what Custer called them—"companions-in-arms." The two boys took to each other at once; for Armstrong or "Autie" Reed, as he was called, was a bright, enthusiastic, go-ahead young fellow, just the sort of a boy that Jack Huntingdon could "tie to." Both boys were full of anticipation and ardor, both were just from school, and both had in them the stuff that makes brave men and heroic soldiers—as, all too soon, opportunity came to test and prove.

The very atmosphere of the "General's room" at Fort Abraham Lincoln fostered this ardor for action. For though the big room was plain and the furniture old and worn, alike wall and floor and chair and sofa were draped with robe and hide of softest fur or laid with rug, and tapestried with hanging from "big game," while down upon the boys looked the heads

of buffaloes and big-horn, antelope, elk, and bear, proof of the prowess of that successful hunter of savage beasts as well as hostile Indians, Custer, "the pride of the border."

There was scant time to do more than get acquainted with his duties and become accustomed to them, for the expedition was to start speedily. So Jack was at once initiated into service as a "herder" by Autie Reed, whose experience was a few days older. Their duties, it must be said, were largely nominal, for the care of the "beef critters" that were to accompany the campaigners to supply the demand for fresh beef devolved upon the "officer of the herd," under whom Autie Reed and Jack Huntingdon were to act as assistants.

But there was much to be learned as to the "service;" so, what with hard riding, inspecting, and rounding-up, drumming up the regular herders, and carrying orders to and from the officer of the herd, the boys had little time to "sojer," and Jack found plenty to do to tire him out, but to toughen him as well, and so prepare him to become a prophecy of that army of sinewy, stalwart, hard-working and hard-riding, fearless and free young fellows who, before ten years more had passed, were to people those wide-reaching plains and valleys as that unique and daring American creation—the cowboy of the Western cattle-range.

But Jack found time to get a glimpse of life at a military post at its most exciting time—on the eve of an Indian campaign. Even the horses in the stables and the mules in the corral seemed to have caught the infection of preparation; while, as for the men, there was, under all their assumed nonchalance and indifference, a certain suppressed excitement that displayed itself in assumption, and communicated itself to the twenty-five new recruits from St. Paul who had there enlisted for the expedition, and were experiencing their first taste of regular army woes in the tyranny of the drill-sergeant and the hazing by their new comrades.

For not alone the Seventh Cavalry—Custer's own command—was detailed for this Yellowstone campaign. The gallant Seventh was but a portion of the big expedition which was mustering for a final drive at the hostile Sioux and their allies. At three separate points troops were massing for the advance, and in three columns,—one of thirteen hundred men led by Crook, the famous Indian-fighter, one of five hundred led by Gibbon, and one of a thousand men led by Terry, with Custer in command of the fighting Seventh, the crack cavalry regiment of the border.

It was the last, General Terry's column, that mustered at Fort Abraham Lincoln, the home of the Seventh Cavalry, and which, when Jack Huntingdon

had joined it, was found to number one thousand officers and enlisted men, and one hundred and eighty packers and herders—including our friend Jack—eleven hundred and eighty men altogether, with mule-teams, horse-teams, ambulances, and other vehicles, four Gatling guns, and a detachment of Indian scouts from the Ree tribe, sworn foemen to the Sioux.

Before Jack joined his command, the other companies and platoons had joined the Seventh Cavalry at Fort Abraham Lincoln, and the white tents of the newcomers crowded the whiter barracks of the post. From tent and barracks came now what Shakspere calls "the dreadful note of preparation"; officers and enlisted men, cooks and armorers, packers and herders, all alike were busy, and even Old Glory itself on the trim parade-ground streamed and fluttered from its staff, the silent inspiration to every soldier to do his duty, heedless of return.

Jack was up before daybreak on the morning of the seventeenth of May; for that was to be the day of departure of the blue column of Indian-fighters from the white barracks of Fort Abraham Lincoln.

At five o'clock in the morning the bugles sounded the "general"—the signal to take down tents and break camp. At once the wagons were packed, the quartermaster hurried them into line, and within an

hour the wagon-train had moved into position and assembled on the plateau just west of the fort. Again the bugles sounded, and in full marching rig the Seventh Cavalry, headed by its band playing its own battle-tune, "Garryowen," and led by its dashing commander, made the full circuit of the green parade, and then halted and dismounted just outside the fort.

The good-byes were said; the infantry (one company of the Sixth United States and two of the Seventh) with one platoon of Gatling guns, manned by a detail from the Twentieth, assembled in columns of fours on the plateau with the wagon-train.

"March!"

The "assembly" was sounded, and the wagon-train with its infantry escort took the road.

"Mount!" "Forward!" Again the bugles rang out. The Seventh is in the saddle. Then in two columns, with its right wing led by Major Reno and its left by Captain Benten, with its band playing bravely "The Girl I Left Behind Me," while General Terry, as the commander of the expedition, galloped on with his staff to join the departing columns, and General Custer dashed to his place as leader of the advance-guard, the whole command, with guidons fluttering, flags flying, and men moving in brave and gallant array, swept across the plateau and off toward the West and duty.

The Yellowstone Expedition had started, and Jack Huntingdon, "herder," was a part of it!

He was excited but earnest. The General had permitted him, with Autie Reed, to remain at the fort till the last, that they might see the demonstration and parade before departure. But once the regiment was on the march, the boys galloped ahead with the General to his post as leader of the advance; then he bade them drop back, one on either side, to where the packers and herders rode in their places to the right and left of the long wagon-train—one hundred and fifty wheeled vehicles in all.

With the soldiers afoot and on horseback, with the long line of pack animals and cattle, with the lumbering battery of Gatling guns, the loaded wagons, and the thousand rifle-barrels gleaming in the sun, the expedition seemed to Jack a most formidable and overpowering display.

"And Autie says there are two more columns just like this, under Crook and Gibbon, making for the same points that we are," he reflected, as his eye took in the whole martial scene. "Well, if we don't finish up the hostiles this trip, then it 's because they won't stay to be finished. I wonder whether Sitting Bull and his Strong Hearts know we are coming? I wonder how strong their hearts would be if they should run up against this outfit?

I wonder if the Bull has any idea that I 'm bringing his answer in this sort of style ? "

And so he kept on wondering about Sitting Bull and Young Wolf and Po-to-sha-sha and Chief Gall and Rain-in-the-Face, and all his Indian friends and foes of a year back, until his new friend, Autie Reed, " cutting through " the lines, called his attention to the beautiful Heart River Valley though which they were marching, and showed him where he and his uncle, Tom Custer, the Captain, had brought a buffalo bull to bay not long before and had a royal hunt. For the Heart River Valley was the favorite hunting-ground of the officers of the dashing Seventh.

Then, as the hired herders seemed amply able to look after their clumsy charges, the " honorary herders," as Jack and Autie had dubbed themselves, took a long gallop up and down the line of march to see just how the train moved as it approached the enemy's country.

It was a long, thin line when compared with the broad stretch of hill and plain over which its slow wavering length moved westward. Far in the lead rode General Custer at the head of one troop as advance-guard, selecting the route to be traversed and the camping-place at the close of the day's march. After him followed the two other troops of the advance-guard, detailed as pioneers and

bridge-builders. Then, guarding the long wagon-train on its right and left flanks, where plodded the pack animals and the beef herd, rode the second battalion, a troop on either side with scouts and flankers thrown out to watch for ambuscades and guard against surprises. Behind all came the rear-guard, keeping the train to its work, picking up stragglers, and helping on the lagging cattle or the mired wagons.

So, day by day, they pushed on toward the West, out into the uninhabited, almost into the unknown —for when that now historic march was made there was, between Bismarck in Dakota and Bozeman in Montana—a stretch of full six hundred miles—not a ranch or human habitation, save the tepees and wicky-ups of the gathering hostiles of the Sioux and their allies, whom this expedition was marching to scatter and to thwart.

Obstacles and delays were many; for the country was rough and broken, and "crossings," were frequent, calling for the bridge-work of the pioneers. Lunches were eaten at midday, camps made at night, yarns spun and jokes played, and for days the onward march seemed to the two boys, entering heartily into the fun, more like a great and continuous picnic than "the horrid front of war." But the leaders were watchful, the scouts were on the alert; every happening was noted, every sign fol-

lowed up, and underneath the fun and the frolic lay the discipline and order of a warlike advance.

The season was that of the opening summer; over all the hill-slopes and river-bottoms was spread a carpet of living green, interwoven with patches and figures of brilliant flowers; it was health and strength to ride through that glorious atmosphere or gallop away now and then on the hunt for the big game of the Bad Lands. For game was plentiful, though shy, and General Custer, a born sportsman, had encouraged his men to hunt whether in barracks or on the march.

Even during his brief stay at the fort, Jack had been particularly attracted by General Custer's dogs —long, lean, aristocratic stag-hounds, rough of coat and smooth of head. These, too, accompanied the expedition, and joined in the occasional hunt for deer or antelope. Jack was a lover of all pets—especially dogs—and made himself familiar with the stag-hounds on the daily march, while they, in return, showed their fondness for this active boy. One of them in particular, a noble hound, known as "the Duke," attached himself to Jack as special escort, and followed him devotedly in camp and afield whenever the boy would yield to his desires and slyly slip his leash.

So at last by easy marches, varying, according to the difficulties of the route, from ten to forty miles

a day, the first of June came in with a summer snow-storm and found the expedition at the crossing of the Little Missouri. To-day the traveller will be shown the site of Custer's three-day camp, where, in later years, near to Medora, stretched the vast cattle-ranges of the Marquis de Mores, of Theodore Roosevelt of the "Rough Riders" regiment, and other of the cattle-kings of the ranching eighties.

On the tenth day of June, General Terry, returning from a conference with General Gibbon of the Montana column, at his camp on the Yellowstone, ordered the right wing of six troops, under Major Reno, to scout up the Powder River country for Indian signs, for the General had heard that the hostiles were gathering somewhere in the pleasant Powder River Valley.

Here was a chance for adventure indeed, and Jack Huntingdon expressed to Autie Reed so ardent a wish that he might go with the Major on his scout that, at Autie's suggestion, General Custer granted permission, and Jack Huntingdon was duly assigned to scouting duty under Major Reno as a volunteer aide.

With twelve days' rations and a determination to strike that trail if there were really any trail to strike, Reno's men galloped off to the southwest, Jack Huntingdon riding gallantly in the van, for the boy was already hail-fellow with officers and men alike, and a prime favorite with all.

A mile, perhaps, had been covered in the advance when, as Jack reined in his pony to take a shallow ford, and rode leisurely in with one hand hanging loose, he felt against his open palm the snuggling, cool muzzle of a four-footed comrade, and glancing down met the upturned and beseeching eyes of the Duke, the General's stag-hound. Whether the dog had slipped his leash, or had been loosened by Autie Reed, Jack could not say; but there he was and there he must stay, and Jack, you may be sure, was delighted. So, too, was the Duke at Jack's cheery welcome.

They rode on along the winding Powder River. Discipline was strict, and straggling was not permitted; but Jack Huntingdon, in his character of civilian volunteer, was not kept in such close surveillance, and, accompanied by the faithful Duke, took to little excursions on his own account, though never far out of sight or sound of his comrades, the troopers.

Independence sometimes breeds heedlessness, especially in a boy of active and inquisitive temperament, and Jack Huntingdon, as you know, had a pretty fair opinion of his own ability to take care of Jack Huntingdon. He felt himself as wide-awake a scout as any in the troop, and was even disposed to criticise Major Reno as over-cautious.

"They 'd find out more if they 'd spread farther

apart," Jack declared to himself, and he found himself studying and reporting presumable Indian signs which, however, when good-humoredly investigated, proved to be no signs at all, much to the lad's discomfiture but never to his entire defeat.

The hunting spirit also took possession of him, with its inclination to wander, especially with the big stag-hound to lure him on; and one day when the Duke had raised a sign of antelopes, Jack rode out of line a piece to get a shot at the fleet-footed game.

But the antelopes bounded off with the Duke in hot pursuit, and, drawn on by the chase, Jack, heedless Jack, wandered still farther out of line until, with Duke on the alert, he rode stealthily into a grove of cottonwoods and actually stalked his game. Then a sure shot—for Jack had grown to be an excellent marksman—brought down the quarry, with the Duke dragging at the throat.

Jack shouted, "Good for you, old chap!" and spurred forward to secure the game and hoist it behind him on his saddle. But, as he did so, out from the shadow of the cottonwoods sprang a half-dozen ambushed figures.

The bridle of the pony was caught and held, and before Jack could turn to ride out of harm's way he found himself forcibly detained.

He drew his revolver and lifted it in emphatic

protest; but, as he did so, looking down at those who barred his way, Jack gave a shout half of surprise and half of gratification to find himself a captive to Po-to-sha-sha—Red Top, the renegade.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW JACK STRUCK THE LODGE POLE TRAIL.

"WHAT, Po-to-sha-sha! is it you?" cried Jack. "Jingoes! I thought I was done for, sure. I thought the hostiles had me."

"And so they have, sonny; so they have," responded the squaw-man, ruefully. "But, Great Jumping Jehoshaphat, boy! where under the sun did you drop from? What are you doing here?"

Jack was just on the point of giving the facts in the case, but, remembering past experiences, he grew wary.

"I 'm bringing back those answers, Red Top," he said.

"No! are you? Bringing 'em back—bringing 'em back to Sitting Bull? Well, I vum!" was all the renegade could find words for. Then he added, looking at Jack curiously:

"Say! where do you live when you 're at home—in a crazy-house? What did they let you out for? Of all boys I ever did see, you 're the beatenest, Big Tooth. Don't you know what 's going on here?"

"Why, I 'm going, if you 'll only let me—you and your crowd," Jack declared; for the hands of his captors were still on his bridle, and one silent brave still had him covered with a Winchester.

Po-to-sha-sha said some words in explanation to his companions, and they released their hold on their prisoner. But the squaw-man still puzzled over Jack's answer.

"Whereabouts you going to?" he queried.

Jack deemed it wise to carry out the strategy he had in view.

"Why, to Sitting Bull's camp, of course," he replied. "That 's what I 'm here for, you know. Say, Red Top, whereabouts is it?"

He asked the question carelessly, but he awaited the reply anxiously.

"Just where it was last year," the renegade replied. "Over yonder in the Greasy Grass."

"Same lodges there, too?" continued Jack, playing the interviewer.

The squaw-man fell an easy prey.

"The same? Well, I should say so," he replied. "Lots more, too—stacks of 'em. The Bull's got a regular con-vention of hostiles assembled there, and he 's just playing the host in his tepee. There 's Uncapapa and Ogallala, Brulé and Minneconjou, Sans Arc and Blackfeet—a whole slew of Injuns."

Jack opened his eyes. And well he might; he was learning just what Terry and Custer wished to know.

"What are they there for?" he asked.

"Why, you see, we 're making that valley the meeting-place for a big hunt," the renegade began. "Why, there must be as many as—but say! look-a-here, sonny, I 'm not giving our secrets away. What you after? I believe you 're just a-pumping me!"

"Why should I?" demanded Jack. "Sha'n't I see for myself when I join the camp?"

"That 's so; you will—when you join the camp," Po-to-sha-sha responded. "But all the same I 'm not telling anything. The Bull would find it out, sure; and he told me to hold my tongue."

That, as Jack knew, was the one thing the squaw-man could not do, under certain conditions. So he proceeded to draw him out further.

"Over in the Greasy Grass, eh—that 's what our folks call the Little Big Horn, is n't it?" he said. "But that 's a good ways from here, Red Top. What are you doing here, so far away from your lodges—and Mi-mi? By the way, how is Mi-mi, Red Top?"

"She 's boss still, sonny, but good in her way, if she is Injun," Po-to-sha-sha replied. "Nothing else to equal her, I reckon."

"That 's so, Mi-mi 's pretty good," Jack as-

sented, turning to flattery. "She used me well when I was in the Uncapapa lodges. I have n't forgotten those corn-dumplings she made for me. Fact is, I want to taste them more than I want to see Sitting Bull. How 's Young Wolf ?"

"Fine, fine, sonny," responded the squaw-man. "He 'll be glad to see you, 'cause now, don't you see ? Sitting Bull will know you are a truth-teller, just as Young Wolf said you were, and that you keep your word."

"Keep my word!" cried Jack, hotly. "Why, what do you take me for, Red Top ? I 'm no treaty-breaker. Where is Young Wolf ?"

"He and Chief Gall have gone to raise the Cheyennes—that is, White Bull's tribe of 'em, you know—same as me and Crazy Horse have been off to raise the Ogallalas at Red Cloud Agency."

Jack was learning a lot.

"What are you raising them for?" he queried, with apparent innocence. "Your big hunt, I suppose ?"

"Big nothin'!" exclaimed Po-to-sha-sha, scornfully. "Why, say! that hunt 's only a blind, don't you see ? Our hunt is for bigger game. We 're out—but there, I 'm letting out things again."

"Well, you 're not afraid of me, surely," said Jack, anxious for more details. "I 'm going to join you and be a Strong Heart, ain't I ? I 'll know more than you do pretty soon."

"Is that so?" cried the squaw-man. "Then, by the jumping Jingoes! you must have brought back a good answer. Have you, sonny? No staking-out, eh?"

"Ask me no questions and I 'll tell you no lies, Red Top," was Jack's reply. "If you 're going to keep mum, I guess other folks can. Did you get any recruits at Red Cloud 's?"

"Oh, they 're slipping away — slipping away, sonny," Po-to-sha-sha responded. "Fact is, sonny," he continued, "the old chief 's madder 'n a hornet about it. He 's getting to be a regular coffee-cooler, Red Cloud is. Between you and me, though," declared the renegade, "I wish the rest of 'em were. This fighting business is no good. It 's bound to get me into trouble."

Here one of the renegade's Indian companions interjected a query, short and sharp. Po-to-sha-sha replied as briefly.

"He thinks you 're a spy, sonny," said the squaw-man in explanation. "Same old story, eh?"

"Where 's your camp?" said Jack.

"Ain't got any—only a few wicky-ups, over on the Rosebud trail," the squaw-man replied. "Red Cloud 's there. These are some of his young men."

"Oh, is that so?" exclaimed Jack, seeing a way out of his difficulty. "Say, Red Top, can't I see the chief before we join Sitting Bull?"

And drawing out the cherished eagle feather, Jack stuck it conspicuously in his hat-band. The young braves recognized it at once, and were visibly impressed. They plied Po-to-sha-sha with questions, which he answered briefly. Then he turned again to Jack.

"Want to see Red Cloud, do you? Well, I don't see what 's to hinder," he declared. "What you want to say to him?"

"Oh, I 'd like to talk things over with him a bit," replied Jack. "I want to get his advice about being a Strong Heart."

"His advice? Huh! I know what he 'll say," said the renegade. "He 'll say just what I do: 'Stick to your own; be a white man.'"

"Is that what he said to you, Red Top?" queried Jack. "You did n't take his advice, did you?"

"Do I look as if I did?" demanded Po-to-sha-sha, with a glance at his savage trappings. "But see here, sonny," he added, "if that 's your way out of this scrape, come on. I 'm sorry for you, but it 's your salvation. We let no white man come into this land and live. It 's Injun's land. But if you 're to be a Strong Heart—a Sha-te su-ta—see!—why, that lets you out. That makes you one of us, and you don't count as a white man. That 's what I 'm telling the boys here, and so it saves your life."

Then, leading Jack's pony by the bridle, he paraded the boy before Red Cloud's braves, and, gesticulating in true Indian fashion, he shouted, pointing to Jack, "Sha-te su-ta! Yip! yip!" and the young braves tossed their arms in welcome and responded with the same shout.

Jack grasped the squaw-man 's hand and shook it heartily.

"Thank you, thank you, Red Top," he said. "You 're always on deck to help me out, are n't you? But suppose this had n't been I. What would have happened?"

The renegade lifted his hair significantly.

"Is that so?" said Jack. "Thank you again, Red Top. But say! why should you stop white men if you are in Red Cloud's band? The big chief is friendly. He 's an agency Injun."

"Yes, that 's so," the squaw-man responded. "But these are ticklish times, sonny. Fact is, even Red Cloud can't hold in his young men from the war-path. There 's lots of 'em slipped out of the agency, and that 's why he 's here—trying to get them back under his thumb again. It 's no use, though. They 've got the fever on 'em, ever since they heard that the soldiers were coming into the Injun country, and nothing will hold 'em in. Why, there 's going to be a sun-dance over on the Rosebud to-morrow, and Sitting Bull will get a dream,

see if he don't. And that dream will be medicine that will just wipe out all the peace talk that Red Cloud could talk from now till doomsday."

"A sun-dance! Oh, can't I see it, Red Top?" cried Jack; and then and there he determined that if there was a sun-dance on foot he would see it, even if he lost the expedition. For a sun-dance was the one thing he wished to see, so he assured himself, and—well, Jack Huntingdon was a boy, and to most boys the thing they desire is the thing most important.

"Well, sonny," said Po-to-sha-sha, deliberately, "I don't know what 's to hinder—if Sitting Bull don't."

"Why should he? I won't see him till after the sun-dance," Jack declared. "I 'll lie low till that comes off. See?"

"Yes, I see," responded the squaw-man. "You 're a right smart boy, sonny; but if you can keep out of the Bull's way, you 're smarter than I think you are."

"Nothing like trying," declared Jack, confidently. "Anyhow, Red Top," he added, "I 'm mighty glad I met you. If I 'd happened to strike a crowd that could n't speak English, I 'd have been in a bad fix, would n't I?"

"You 're right there, Big Tooth," the squaw-man replied. "That ain't a fashionable language

just now 'round these diggings. Come, push on, sonny. If you 're going to call on Red Cloud, now 's your time."

He motioned to the Indians to move on. And, with the faithful Duke trotting at his pony's heels, Jack rode with his escort on to Red Cloud's wicky-ups beyond the fords of the Powder.

As he rode, gradually—for he was discovering just how to handle and draw out Po-to-sha-sha—Jack learned from the renegade all the things that had happened in the Uncapapa lodges since he had left them a year before.

He heard how, on the big plain to the north of Crow Butte, the commissioners from the President had met the Sioux chiefs for a " big talk " over the sale of the Black Hills, which the Western people wished to open to mining and settlement. He heard, too, how the sale came to nothing, even though Red Cloud advised it, largely because, so Jack shrewdly suspected, such advisers as Po-to-sha-sha and other squaw-men, who knew the value of gold-mines and the feverish desire of white men to get at them, had told the Sioux chiefs to hold out for a big price.

" Why, sonny, what do you think ? " the renegade declared. " Those fellows—the commissioners, you know—they offered us four hundred thousand dollars a year for the use of the land as long as the

white men wished to use it, or to buy it outright for six million dollars on the instalment plan. But we laughed at 'em. Why, those hills are full of gold, Big Tooth—yes, sir, full! And do you suppose we 'd let 'em go for any such sum as that? No, sir; we just want fifty millions, or nothing. If I 've got anything to say, the chiefs don't let it go for any such sum as the commissioners offered. I 'm interested in this thing, you see, sonny," he added, slyly. " I 'm after a slice myself."

" You ?" cried Jack. " Why, Red Top, you 're an Injun, you are. You said as much, and an Injun has no need of money. What would you do with so much ? Why, some of you boys that asked fifty millions in the morning would be round begging for a shirt in the evening. You 'd gamble it all away before you knew you had it."

The squaw-man drew himself away angrily.

" See here! what do you talk like that for ?" he demanded. " Do you think I 've turned Injun so bad that I don't know what money 's good for ? I 've got a plan, I have," he added, cunningly, "and if there 's any money in this thing I 'm going to have some of it."

" What 's your plan ?" queried Jack.

" Sh!" said the squaw-man, warningly. " Never you mind. That 's my secret. If you stay here among us and become an Injun, I 'll tell you this

much: I 'll let you into this deal, and you can make your everlasting fortune if you 'll stick by me."

"But the government will never give you anything like your price for the land," Jack declared.

"Won't they, though? Then we 'll make 'em," the renegade responded. "They 've got to have the Hills, and our fellows will get their price or fight; that 's all there is about it. And when we do get our price, and I get my share of those millions,—my, though! won't I just get square with the fellows that drove me out? You see if I don't."

Here was a hint at his story at last; Jack saw it, and was quick to jump at it.

"Drove you out, Red Top?" he said. "What for?"

"Say, where did you get that dog, sonny? He 's a beauty, he is," Po-to-sha-sha demanded, abruptly changing the subject, as he always did when it affected his own secret.

"That 's one of General Custer's," replied Jack, unguardedly. "He 's a great friend of mine, are n't you, Duke, old fellow?"

The stag-hound leaped to the boy's stirrup-leather in reply, but the renegade caught at the word.

"Custer! Chief Long Hair!" he cried. "Then you came out with him, did you? For heaven's sake, Big Tooth, don't let the Bull know that.

It 'll stir him up to do—I don't know what, with you. He 'll stake you out sure. Better kill the dog now, or give him to me."

"Kill the Duke! Give him away! Well, I guess not. You don't know me yet, Red Top," cried Jack, hotly, "if you think I go back on my friends like that. I did n't say I came here with Custer, did I? I said the dog was one of the General's, and so he is. But I brought him from Fort Lincoln—or, rather, he followed me. He thinks a heap of me, Duke does—don't you, old fellow?"

Again the dog leaped in joyful acknowledgment.

"Then you did n't come with Custer?" queried Po-to-sha-sha.

"Why, how could I?" Jack replied, evasively. "Custer is miles away from here, I reckon." And following the squaw-man's own lead, he changed the subject abruptly, feeling that he was on dangerous ground. "What happened after the commissioners left Crow Butte?" he asked, reverting to the original topic of conversation.

"Why, you see, they would n't give in, and we would n't give in," the renegade replied, "and there the matter held. It mighty near split up this nation, though. Some of 'em stuck by Red Cloud and Young-Man-Afraid-of-his-Horses, who are both of 'em willing to sell, you know; but the biggest part of the young men and fighting chiefs, they

went over to Sitting Bull's side and came over this way to the Greasy Grass, you know. Then the government ordered 'em all back to the reservations. But they would n't go, and when the fellows at Washington threatened to turn the soldiers on 'em, they said, 'Turn 'em on. We ain't afraid.' And they ain't."

"They did send some, did n't they?" queried Jack.

"Yes, the Gray Fox—that 's General Crook, you know—he started out for us, and Sitting Bull he sent me off to find the Gray Fox," Po-to-sha-sha said. "I told him just what the Bull told me to say. 'Come on!' says the Bull, says he. 'You need n't bring any guides with you. The way to my lodges is easy. You can find me right here. I won't run away.'"

"And did General Crook come?" asked Jack, greatly interested.

"Did he? Well, I reckon he did," the renegade replied. "The Gray Fox always keeps his word. He 's like you that way, Big Tooth. He came right up here, about where you 're riding now, by the Powder, and tried to raid Crazy Horse's camp. You know Crazy Horse, the Ogallala, Big Tooth? He 's a fighter, he is. Last March that was. Cold! Well, it was cold enough to freeze a brass monkey, and those soldiers were about stiff when they got

here. They charged the camp and stampeded the ponies, but Crazy Horse fought 'em from the bluffs, and they had to clear out, and we got the ponies back. We 've got lots of guns, you see, and we can fight, same as the soldiers can."

"Guns!" exclaimed Jack, remembering Sitting Bull's promise to his tribesmen. "You got guns, then, did you? How?"

"Oh, the Bull fixed all that. He 's a shrewd one, he is," the squaw-man replied. "We 've got all we want, I tell you. From the agencies."

And Jack learned later that this indeed was the truth, and that by the craft of Sitting Bull and the cupidity of certain white men the hostiles had supplied themselves, from the agencies, with even better guns than the United States troops themselves had. It was a bad piece of business.

"Well, there you are, sonny," the renegade continued. "The soldiers got the worst of it, and the Bull 's on top. And now he 's off at the old camping-ground where you saw him, and the young men from Red Cloud's reservation and the other agencies are slipping away, just like these braves here, to join the Bull and Gall and Crazy Horse. Full of fight, too, they are. See there, see that trail. That 's what Crook and Custer and the other soldiers would open their eyes to see. That 's the Lodge Pole trail, that is, and it leads right across the Rosebud

and off to the camp on the Greasy Grass—the Little Big Horn, as you call it. There 's a whole Injun army gone over that."

They had climbed a bluff, and now stood a moment looking down into the fair valley of the Rosebud. Across the broad stretch of green a wide, worn line was distinctly visible. Along it *travois* had gone in numbers large enough to scratch and mark it well. Along it, even as he looked, Jack could see, here and there, groups of moving figures, warriors on horseback, *travois* loads of lodge equipage, ponies, dogs, and squaws. The boy's heart gave a leap. What would Major Reno, what would General Custer give to see what he saw, to know what he knew? He had found it—the Lodge Pole trail—the path along which hundreds of hostiles were pressing to join the camp of Sitting Bull, the leader of the uprising, in the valley of the Little Big Horn.

"But where 's Red Cloud?" he asked.

"Red Cloud? Oh, Red Cloud," repeated the wily squaw-man, scratching his red poll. "Why, I reckon he 's on his reservation, sonny. That was only a bluff, you know."

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE SUN-DANCE.

JACK HUNTINGDON saw that he had been trapped. He turned on his companion indignantly.

"See here, Red Top! what do you mean?" he said. "You 've lied to me."

"Looks a little bit that way, sonny," the renegade replied, good-humoredly. "But, bless you, it was the only thing to do. If I had n't held you some such way, you 'd have been sure to tumble into the first fool danger that showed up—and then where 'd I been? In it with you; and a fellow has to look out for Number One these times."

Jack was not ready to assent to the insinuation that he could not take care of himself, neither was he entirely ready to agree to Po-to-sha-sha's statement as to his own selfishness. He was not yet clear in his own mind as to the renegade's character. Was he brave, or a coward? He was continually protesting that he was a coward, but Jack remembered one of Shakspere's plays that he had read

at school in which one character said of another that he protested too much.

"Don't you see, Big Tooth," said the squaw-man, "if I had n't taken you in charge, some other Injun would, and then how would you have fared? We ain't any of us too easy with white men just now if we get hold of 'em, and I reckon you 'd rather I had you than such fellows as Crazy Horse or Rain-in-the-Face."

Clearly Po-to-sha-sha believed that this was one of the occasions when the end justified the means, and Jack, with a shudder at what might have been his fate if he had been ambushed by a rampant hostile, was disposed to accept the squaw-man's explanations. He stretched out a hand in acknowledgment.

"How!" he said, in his best Indian manner. "Po-to-sha-sha heap good."

"That 's the talk, sonny," replied the squaw-man, with a loud guffaw. "You stick to me, and I 'll get you out of this scrape if I can. First, we 'll see the sun-dance, and then, if you 're bound to, we 'll see the Bull—or you can."

All day they followed the tortuous trail in the shadow of the Chetish Mountains, forded the Tongue River and camped that night in their wicky-ups by the side of a rippling creek.

Jack was as tired as any healthy boy who has

ridden all day in that invigorating Western atmosphere, heedless of any danger so long as he felt safe in the presence and protection of Po-to-sha-sha.

With the first streak of dawn the squaw-man aroused the sleeping boy.

"Get up, Big Tooth," he said. "It 's time for business. No, never mind your coat," as Jack attempted to draw it on. "You 've got to wear other togs to-day. If you want to live, you 've got to be an Injun. Just let me fix you up, and don't you say a word. If you go down into the valley with those clothes on, you 'll never come out alive."

Jack would have protested, but he saw that Po-to-sha-sha was in earnest, and he placed himself in the renegade's hands. Within a half-hour, even his own mother would not have recognized Jack Huntingdon of New York in Big Tooth, the Strong Heart.

Where the squaw-man got the "togs" from Jack never knew. He may have taken them from the extra wardrobes of his companions, but, as Jack declared, "they did n't seem to be carrying any extra trunks or valises, and did n't look as if they could spare very much of their every-day suits anyhow."

Wherever he had foraged, Po-to-sha-sha had been successful, and with an agency shirt, buckskin-fringed trousers, moccasins, hair-feather, and ground-

paint, Jack Huntingdon made a very presentable Indian brave. His " civilization clothes " he rolled into a tight bundle and placed behind his pony-saddle, and then while Po-to-sha-sha looked after the hasty breakfast, the " new Injun " spent the time in becoming used to his new rig and in getting the Duke used to him, also. Clearly, the big hound suspected something, and was alike uneasy and depressed.

Red Cloud's braves in Po-to-sha-sha's party displayed no surprise when Jack joined them under the cottonwoods.

" Sha-te su-ta! " they cried. " Our brother is a Strong Heart. He will hang bravely at the sun-dance."

" Not much he won't," grunted Po-to-sha-sha, when he had given Jack their words. " You 're no Rain-in-the-Face to hang yourself upon skewers and kick on nothing just for the fun of saying you have, are you, Big Tooth ? I never went into that business, and I 've been an Injun for—well, for a long time. You just lay low and watch; that 's all you need to do."

They mounted again and rode along the creek, forded it, climbed the bluffs, and then, halting, looked down on the plain that stretched away from Tulloch's Creek to the bluffs above the Little Big Horn.

Everywhere were tepees and wicky-ups, the sign of a big encampment, though evidently only a temporary one. In the centre of the plain rose what, so Jack declared afterwards, looked like a circus-tent with the top blown off.

"What is it?" he asked his conductor.

"It 's the sun-dance tent," replied the squaw-man. "That 's where the braves dance for two days with the sun in their eyes and then hang themselves for another day to show how brave they are. I 'm going to smuggle you in there, so 's you can see it. The centre pole is the sun-pole. The first day of the dance it is set up all alone, and then all the braves charge their ponies at it lickety-split, shooting guns and arrows, trying to knock it over. If it stands, it 's good medicine, and they use it for the pole of their tent. You see the tent is all open at the top, so 's the sun can stream in. The rest of it is covered for a shelter for those who don't dance. That 's you and me, sonny. Only a few can get in, but I 've got a ticket."

The evident Americanisms and quaint absurdities of this curious man, neither white man nor Indian, and yet singularly both, often touched Jack's sense of the humorous, but this last remark was so delightfully out of place that it set the boy off in so hearty a laugh that he almost cracked his paint, and quite belied his serious Indian character.

But Po-to-sha-sha checked him quickly.

"Hold up, sonny," he said. "There ain't much laughing in this outfit. This is business, this is. Going to church out East ain't in it alongside of this sun-dance. You just want to get a lariat wound round that laugh of yours and haul it in double-quick."

Jack did as he was bidden, and in sedate fashion they rode their trail through the "cooley" (as the frontiersmen call the coulée or gully that cuts through the bluffs) and descended to the valley. Little groups of new arrivals were repeatedly coming into camp, so the entrance of Jack and his companions on the scene did not occasion much comment after they had passed the scouts.

The chief life of the place centred about the roofless "circus-tent." The only disturbance was an onset of the mangy camp dogs against the Duke, but Po-to-sha-sha's stick and Jack's energy, coupled with the Duke's evident distaste for his new surroundings, warded off trouble. The squaw-man speedily had Jack's pony and his dog carefully screened from view in an out-of-the-way wicky-up, and then with some cabalistic word which was evidently an open sesame to the sun-tent, the renegade and his companion, the Indian boy who was no Indian, were soon inside the enclosure.

Then Jack discovered that it was no real tent, but

a central pole from which long ropes stretched to the grass, the ground ends of these ropes being covered with blankets and robes as a temporary screen.

In the shadow of these coverings all around the enclosure many Indians squatted, silent observers, save as they joined in the occasional songs.

"They are the audience, or congregation, I suppose," Jack said to himself. "What are they saying, Red Top?" he asked.

But the only answer the squaw-man could make was, "Sh, sonny; they are *wa-ku-be*—that 's sacred, you know."

In the arena a half-dozen braves, naked to the waist, knelt with hands clinched against their breasts, facing the sun, staring steadily at its glowing heart, while a dozen candidates for the supreme test were executing what, to them, were the solemn measures of the sun-dance.

Their hands, too, were clinched upon the breast; their eyes, also, were fixed upon the full-orbed sun; and their dance, which seemed to Jack only a well-timed succession of meaningless hops or leaps, accompanied by the beating of the Indian drum and the monotonous "hi- yi-yi" of the dancers and their audience, was in movement from east to west, following the daily course of the sun they worshipped.

In the very centre of the arena a half-dozen of the

bravest of the brave writhed in torture. But it was a self-inflicted torture, intended to be sacrificial. For such a "mortification of the flesh," even as in old Bible times it was deemed pleasing and acceptable to God, was now, by these Indian worshippers, esteemed grateful to Wakanda—the Great Spirit or Superior Being who guided the sun in its daily journey, and to whom bravery and contempt of pain were especially acceptable.

These picked braves, who endured unflinchingly the supreme tests of the sun-dance, rites, proceeded to their self-torture by letting the medicine-man puncture the flesh just below the collar-bone on either breast; into this puncture they inserted skewers of bone, and around the projecting ends of these skewers a deerskin thong was crisscrossed like a kite-string on its handle and tied to a strong rope that hung from the central pole—the *ujeti*, or sacred pole. The test was for the young brave to work himself loose or break from his fetters, or to hang by his deerskin thong from the rope to which it was fastened.

The pain endured in these tests was a horrible torture, and yet, as it was a test of courage to undergo it, no brave was esteemed fully "accepted by Wakanda" unless he had attempted the self-sacrifice,—for such the Sioux warriors esteemed it. Rain-in-the-Face had hung for four hours in such a

self-inflicted torture, and other braves had stretched their skin and strained their muscles in this dreadful test, leaving marks and scars that were ever after esteemed the badge of courage, the sign of sacrifice.

It was the unrefined expression of a pagan fanaticism, such as the histories of all religions record—the devotees of India, the flagellants of the Middle Ages, the ascetics of a later day. The skewered flesh of the writhing Sioux was surely as grateful to a just and tender God as the high-perched absurdities of St. Simon Stylites, the hair-cloth shirt of vicious and repentant Mediæval kings, or the self-imposed conscience tortures of certain zealous Puritans. Just look these up in history some day, boys and girls, and compare them. Then see if, after all, the Psalmist and Sir Walter Scott were not right (overhaul your *Ivanhoe* and find it):

> "But Thou hast said, The blood of goats,
> The flesh of rams I will not prize;
> A contrite heart and humble thought
> Are Mine accepted sacrifice."

I don't imagine that Jack Huntingdon had just such a conclusion in his mind as he looked upon this horrible and pagan scene before him; and yet Jack was a boy of a good deal of common-sense, even if he was heedless and sometimes inconsiderate. At all events he did turn to Po-to-sha-sha after one or two smothered exclamations at the cruel spectacle

before him, and mutter: "Say! what 's the good of it all?"

And all that the squaw-man could reply was, "It 's Injun! None of it for me, thank you. My flesh is too tender."

Finally, when Jack had begun to feel that he could not longer endure this torturing, tearing scene of sacrifice, and was even on the point of saying as much to Po-to-sha-sha, suddenly there strode into the arena a figure that quite turned the current of Jack Huntingdon's thoughts, and caused even Po-to-sha-sha, the squaw-man, to shrink into the shadow as if he would obliterate himself.

"Lay low, sonny!" he said. "By the Great Horn Spoon! it 's the Bull!"

And Sitting Bull indeed it was.

He was dressed,—or, undressed, rather,—for his office of medicine-maker and seer.

Naked, save for breech-clout, moccasins, and blanket-sash, his head wore not the bonnet of the war-chief but the triple feathers of the medicine-chief, while his face, scarred and pitted though it was, shone with the glow of prophecy and triumph. He crossed the arena, and standing amid the enthusiasts of the torture-rope, his voice rang out deep, stern, and compelling.

Jack, when he saw that the big medicine-chief was not on a hunt for him, felt his courage returning,

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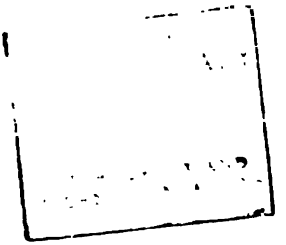


and with it his curiosity. Even Po-to-sha-sha made himself more in evidence, and, squatting at Jack's ear, prepared to give him the substance of Sitting Bull's talk.

It was not so long as it was earnest. Even the renegade's interpretation caught something of its enthusiasm and turned his Americanisms into Indian imagery.

"He 's had a dream," Po-to-sha-sha said. "He 's been making medicine upon the bluff. He 's got it in a bag there, see, hanging on his cue-stick."

"Brothers," said the medicine-chief, "I have dreamed long and deep. I have seen strange things. I have talked with Wakanda [the Superior Being]. He came to me riding on an eagle. His heart was good. He made the medicine good. He spoke to me as I knelt in the medicine lodge; my brothers, Wakanda spoke to me, and his heart was good. He told me that the Long-Swords were coming—the Gray Fox and Chief Long Hair and other braves with guns. But he said the Dakotas, too, have guns, the brothers of To-tan-ka-i-yo-ta-ke have guns, the Strong Hearts have guns. 'Do you, O Master of the Strong Hearts,' he said to me, 'bid the young men and the chiefs of the Dakotas rise up and go out to the fight; for,' said he, 'the Gray Fox shall be withered; the Long Hair shall be overcome. The Dakotas are brave; the Strong Hearts are

brave; the young men who suffer without shrinking at the sacred pole are brave. Let the Dakotas go out to meet the Long-Swords, for,' so said Wakanda, 'the Dakotas shall wipe them from the face of the earth.' Brothers, your trials are over; your bravery at the torture-post is rewarded. They who come by the thieves' road shall never go back. For Wakanda has spoken it."

A great shout went up from the people. Even the devotees at the sacred pole forgot their pain and shouted with the rest. And Sitting Bull said: "Let the chiefs and medicine-men, let the Ni-ka-ga-hi gather at my lodge to make the war-paint. For the Gray Fox is near; he is coming nearer. We must meet and overcome him at once. But first, O brothers! bring in now the war ponies that we may make of them medicine ponies, so that none may overcome them in the fight."

Then one by one the best war ponies were brought within the sacred sun-tent, and while a war-chief held the bridle the medicine-men streaked each pony with the red earth-paint, touched it with the medicine-bag that contained Wakanda's promise of victory, and muttered deep incantations over it which Jack supposed to be blessings or a consecration to war.

Suddenly Jack started up. For, into the sacred tent, led by no less a brave than Rain-in-the-Face

himself, came Jack's own pony, which Po-to-sha-sha had so carefully concealed in a wicky-up of his own making.

"Great Scott!" cried Jack, "it 's Brutus. It 's my pony."

"Is that so? I believe you, sonny, it really is," said Po-to-sha-sha. "Now, how under the sun did they find him? I had him corralled slicker than a bug in a rug. That beats me, it does."

"Well, see here!" ejaculated indignant Jack, "they don't play any monkey-shines with my pony. I won't stand it. See here!"—and without a thought of consequences, Jack leaped into the arena,—"take your hands off that horse. He 's my pony," and he fairly snatched Brutus's bridle from the hand of Rain-in-the-Face.

A cry of astonishment—that most un-Indian weakness—leaped from the lips of the assembled company.

But Sitting Bull stalked up to the white boy masquerading as an Indian, clapped both hands upon his shoulders, and looked into his eyes.

"It is Big Tooth, the white boy," he said—or so Po-to-sha-sha assured Jack that he said, as later they went over the incident. "He has come with the answers. Good. He is a truth-teller. The answers —give me my answers, Big Tooth!" And then, as the full meaning of Jack's return came to him, the big chief thrust out his hand to the white boy.

"How! heap good!" he said. "Sha-tesu-ta—Strong Heart! Strong Heart!"

And from his own head he drew one of the sacred eagle feathers of the medicine-man, and decorated the hair of this white boy who had kept his word.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE DUKE TOOK A HAND.

"PO-TO-SHA-SHA!"

The well-known summons from which there was no appeal rang sharply out, and from his covert in the shadow of the tent-screen, the squaw-man slouched out to his place as interpreter between the boy and the Bull.

"The chief asks for your answers, boy," the squaw-man translated, following the lead of Sitting Bull's demand. "What said the Big White Chief —the Great Father—the President, you know? What said Pah-hoska—Long Hair—General Custer, he means."

For an instant Jack Huntingdon hesitated. The crowding adventures that had come to him had, for the moment, driven from his mind the messages he bore. How different they might have been had either President or General imagined that this boy would really so quixotically follow out his promise to the letter, Jack did not know. He did not even surmise that had they been as he honestly proposed to convey them, the phrasing would have been more

politic. He only knew that he had answers for this Indian insurgent, from the leaders to whom his summons had been sent. Jack was always truthful and outspoken. He did not seek to soften his message, and even as he hesitated the words came back to him with startling force.

"The Great Father tells the chief that the United States is bigger than the Sioux nation, and what the white men want they will have. He says he would deal justly with the Injun, but that not a whole barnyard of bulls shall move him or tell him what he ought to do."

Po-to-sha-sha, with one despairing glance at Jack, gave the chief a literal rendering of the boy's report, while the sun-dancers paused in their leapings, and even the devotees at the torture-ropes stood still to listen.

A chorus of disapproving grunts greeted the message from the President. But Sitting Bull made no sign. He merely looked unmoved and steadily into the white boy's eyes.

"And Pah-hoska,—Chief Long Hair?" he asked at last.

"General Custer—the White Chief with the Long Yellow Hair, as you Injuns call him—says he will be on hand," Jack reported. "But he says Sitting Bull will not be there to meet him. He says you won't fight, Mr. Bull. He says you are shrewd and

cunning, and have a way of letting the other fellows fight while you keep out of the way. That 's why, he says, you won't be on hand. That 's why, he says, your talk of meeting him, man to man, face to face, is all bosh."

"By the Jumping Jehoshaphat, sonny! but you are making a mess of it," muttered Po-to-sha-sha with a smothered groan. "Don't you want to keep what little hair you have got?" and then he interpreted harshly and literally. And still the Bull made no sign of disapproval or wrath, though the words were as the deepest insult to an Indian brave.

But the listening followers of the chief did give expression to their disapproval. With angry cries they flung out their hands as if they would tear in pieces this messenger from their foe. And one, thrusting his black head between the white boy and the interpreter, shook it vigorously as he questioned the young envoy.

"And Little Hair? What said Little Hair to my token?" he demanded.

It was Rain-in-the-Face. Still with his hand on Brutus's bridle, he dragged the resisting and would-be medicine pony after him as he flung out the query, which Po-to-sha-sha translated.

"He says if you want his heart, to come and take it," Jack replied. "He keeps it in the usual place, he says, but he knows that Rain-in-the-Face will

never go near enough to find it. He remembers, says Tom Custer, —that 's Little Hair, as you call him—that Little Hair took Rain-in-the Face like a squaw at Standing Rock; he 'll take him again like a squaw and tie his hands behind his back with his own big boasts—that 's what Captain Tom says."

Rain-in-the-Face gave a snarl of rage.

"Little Hair is a thief and the son of a thief," he cried. "He shall know that the heart of Rain-in-the-Face is brave; he shall tremble when the knife of Rain-in-the-Face tears at his coward heart. A squaw? ugh! Little Hair is a dog—a dog of the Crows. Rain-in-the-Face will have his heart. He will eat it!"

"What a Shylock!" said Jack to himself. "You 're too dead certain of your pound of flesh, young fellow. Just you wait till Tom Custer gets at you once, that 's all."

And still Sitting Bull stood quiet. The reply of Custer had evidently wounded his pride, though, like a true Indian, he would not show his scars.

But even as he held his peace, another spoke, as the medicine-chief waved aside the angry Rain-in-the-Face. Unnoticed, save by Po-to-sha-sha, the newcomer had entered the sun-tent and overheard the delivery of the message. It was Co-ka-bi-ya-ya, the One who Marches in the Centre, better known as Chief Gall. As he came forward, Po-to-sha-sha

shrunk away and drew Jack toward him. He had no desire to be a middleman at this meeting of the rival chiefs.

"Pah-hoska is right," said Gall, according to Po-to-sha-sha's interpretation. "Others do the fighting. To-tan-ka keeps out of it until all is over. Then if the Dakotas win, it is his medicine—he did it; but if they fail, it is their fault. His mother was right when she gave him the Ree boy's name; he is the bull that sits, while brave men boldly rush into the fight."

Po-to-sha-sha had scarcely finished his translation when Jack felt a hand thrust within his own. He turned quickly, and the next instant was clasping hands with Young Wolf.

The two chieftains—the war-chief and the medicine-chief—wrangled on at their own quarrel; for they were ever rivals for the leadership of their tribe and jealous of each other's prominence. But the two boys, left alone for the moment, unnoticed in the general interest over the wordy duel, slipped outside of the enclosure of the sun-tent to a quiet spot beneath the cottonwoods.

"Big Tooth Sioux now?" queried Young Wolf. "What this mean?" And he indicated by look and touch the paint and feathers, the deerskins and moccasins of the short-haired Indian, the metamorphosed New Yorker.

"Oh, that 's Red Top's plan—for this occasion only," Jack replied. "Don't I make a good Injun?"

"Ugh! heap good!" grunted Young Wolf, with disapproving sarcasm. "Paint wear off; where Injun then? Paint not make Injun," he declared emphatically. "Heart make Injun; heart make white boy. Big Tooth never Injun; always white boy."

"But Red Top was a white boy, and now he 's an Injun," said Jack. "Why can't I be like him?"

Young Wolf smiled on his friend disdainfully.

"He Po-to-sha-sha; you Big Tooth," he replied, as if that were explanation enough. But then he added, "Po-to-sha-sha coffee-cooler. 'Fraid of white man. Go far off from white men—ten, four days. Hide face from white man; have to stay Injun. You no coffee-cooler; you brave."

"Thanks, old fellow," responded Jack. "But what 's Red Top afraid of white men for? What 's he done?"

"Red Top say nothing 'bout that; swallow tongue," Young Wolf replied. "But not care 'bout Red Top. Care 'bout Big Tooth. What doing here?"

"Bringing my answer to Sitting Bull, of course," Jack replied, with a smile. "Did n't I say I would? Did n't I tell you I was like George Washington, Young Wolf—I could n't tell a lie?"

"Are answers bad?"

"Well—they were—for you Injuns," Jack confessed. "But if you 'll go back to the reservations right off the bad answers need n't come true."

"Uncapapa free! Ogallala free! This country ours," the young Indian replied.

"But the government will buy it from you," explained Jack. "You 'll be lots better off."

Young Wolf looked at Jack steadily.

"How sell land?" he exclaimed. "We born here; we die here. Earth Injun's mother. Would Big Tooth sell mother?"

It was the Indian's one unfailing argument in those days before they accepted the theory of a transferred proprietorship of land. It was the hardest thing to answer or to combat.

"But Red Cloud is willing to sell," said Jack.

"Red Cloud's heart weak; white man's medicine make big chief *Yantonais* Injun—coffee-cooler—agency man. We free Uncapapa—free Ogallala. We keep land—fight for it."

"Fight for it, eh?" said Jack. "What 's the use, Young Wolf? The soldiers will get the best of you. Why! there are enough coming—" and here he changed the subject, remembering that he was giving away state secrets. "Where have you been, Young Wolf?" he demanded hastily. "Where did you come from just now?"

The Indian boy waved his hand toward the north.

"Young Wolf rode with Pi-zi—Chief Gall—to have big talk with White Bull and the Cheyennes. They coming. They be here soon. Big Tooth see."

"Why! what are they coming for? The sun-dance is over," said Jack. "I thought just your Uncapapa people came here. What 's up?"

But before Young Wolf could answer—if indeed he would have answered save in the way of an Indian boast—what one might call the "yellow journalism" of the plains,—Jack was pounced upon by Po-to-sha-sha.

"Great smithereens! sonny," he cried. "What you doing here? The Bull 's just a-roaring for you. He and Gall have been having a regular set-to over who 's who. But, bless you, Gall don't stand any chance when the Bull lays himself out to talk."

"Ugh!" grunted Young Wolf. "Bull all tongue; Gall all heart."

"That 's so, boy,—Fox and Elk, eh?" said the squaw-man. "Well, the Fox he 's talked his end around as he always does, and now he 's yelling for Big Tooth. But say, sonny," exclaimed the renegade, as the boy rose and walked beside him to the sun-tent, "what 's got into you? You just gave it to Bull straight, did n't you? I vum! I turned

all goose-flesh to hear you go on so. You 'll do. That 's just what Injuns like. He 'll make you a Strong Heart, sure."

" Big Tooth told truth. Injuns love truth," said Young Wolf. " Big Tooth our brother."

" Yes, and he saved you from a picnic, Young Wolf," said Po-to-sha-sha, meaningly. " Just you see him through. I can't do anything in there, you know."

" Red Top not teach Young Wolf duty," the Indian boy replied, indignantly. " Young Wolf know."

" Oh, of course, of course," the squaw-man cried, apologetically. " I just wanted to brace you up, you know, 'cause there 's no telling what the Bull will do."

They stood once more within the sacred enclosure of the sun-tent. The dance had ceased; but still at the horrible torture-ropes those braves who had not torn themselves free were panting and struggling, while Rain-in-the-Face exhorted them to fresh enthusiasm by his boast of what he had achieved when in the big sun-dance at Standing Rock he had hung for four hours from the torture-ropes. Brutus, the pony, still waited in the ring, his sides smeared with the medicine paint. Near him stood Sitting Bull, apparently triumphant, for Gall was not to be seen.

Wavering but an instant between partisanship

and loyalty, Young Wolf, as a kinsman of the Elk, withdrew to follow his chief, and Jack, alone, save for the uncertain support of Po-to-sha-sha the renegade, stood before Sitting Bull.

"How! heap good!" The chief's extended hand grasped that of the white boy and shook it warmly.

"That 's all right for a beginning," said Jack to himself.

Then the chief broke out in a harangue, to which Po-to-sha-sha listened closely and then briefly interpreted.

"The chief says, boy," said Po-to-sha-sha, "that Big Tooth is a brave. You have brought back the answer to his messages as you promised. You have told them straight. You have not smoothed them down, nor lied about them like a coward. For this, the chief says, he thanks you. Beside the eagle feather of Red Cloud, he bids you wear the eagle feather of To-tan-ka, the Bull. But your answers, the chief says, are bad. The Great Father does not know his children of the Dakotas; the Chief Long Hair spits in the face of Sitting Bull. For a good answer, boy, you were to be made a Strong Heart; for a bad answer you were to die. What have you to say to the chief, boy?—and for goodness' sake, sonny, cave!" implored the renegade, breaking away from his climax hurriedly. "Say anything that 'll get you off. I can't help you any more."

Jack never wavered.

"Tell the old fraud," he replied, talking at Po-to-sha-sha, but looking straight at Sitting Bull, "that an American can do his duty every time, not because he 's afraid, but because it 's the thing to do. I promised to come back with my answer, and I came. If he lays a hand on me, he 'll suffer for it, medicine or no medicine. But here I am in his power. He 'll try some low-down trick on me, I know. Just you tell him, Red Top, he can't frighten me, but if he wants to be a man, let him learn white men's ways and never pick on a fellow when he 's in a corner. We always fight fair; just let him try it once, and see how it seems."

"Tut-tut, sonny! but you ain't acting right. You ain't, really," groaned Po-to-sha-sha, as he rendered the boy's defiance into Sioux.

The medicine-chief nodded. Then through the interpreter he replied. "It is like a brave," he said. "If he lives, Big Tooth shall be a Strong Heart. But that the chief may not eat his words, boy," Po-to-sha-sha continued, "the boy shall first, he says, do one of two things: pull at the torture-ropes, like his brothers here, and become a great brave, or run the gauntlet. Which will you do? There! I knew just how it would be, sonny," the friendly squaw-man concluded. "Why under the sun did n't you lie out of it as I told you to?"

"Honesty 's the best policy, old fellow," replied Jack. "But say! ask the chief to give me five minutes to choose. I want to think the thing over."

Sitting Bull consented.

"When the sun throws the pole shadow here where I stand," he replied through the renegade, "the boy must answer. Until then he is safe."

Jack thought hard. That shadow, he figured out, would shift in less than ten minutes. He could not, he knew, stand any of that torture-rope business; he would not, if he could help it, run the gauntlet.

The squaw-man still stood beside him.

"Red Top," he whispered, "quick! find Gall. Tell him."

The squaw-man edged cautiously away. No one noticed him. Jack was left alone.

Slowly the shadow travelled toward the line of danger. None moved within the sacred tent, save where the devotees panted and pulled at their horrible skewers. With true Indian courtesy, no one looked at Jack to hamper him in his decision.

Nearer and nearer moved the shadow line. Jack knew that he must give his decision soon. Well, he would take his chances at the gauntlet. He was the champion trick runner in his set. He 'd try some of his fancy dodges. And yet, suppose——

A shadow fell across the entrance-way, a commanding voice broke the silence. Jack breathed freer. It was Chief Gall, and close behind him walked Young Wolf.

Jack's plans were swiftly laid. For while the big war-chief with angry protest faced his successful rival and demanded the white boy's release, Jack decided he would take no such chances. To the words of the rival chiefs, as interpreted by the faithful Po-to-sha-sha, Jack paid no attention. Instead, he caught Young Wolf by the hand.

"Young Wolf, help me just once more," he muttered. "Get that pony of mine out by the door somehow, and clear a way for me if you can. I 'll make one try for life anyhow."

"Good! Young Wolf help. Big Tooth keep eye open," came the answer of his friend.

Skirting the crowd, now all intent upon the disputing chieftains, Young Wolf hustled and shoved the half-dozen medicine ponies still in the tent, awaiting the uncompleted ceremony of consecration.

Evidently the warriors thought him moving the ponies to clear a space for the gauntlet test. They paid no attention to his movements, for all eyes were still on the rival chiefs.

Even Po-to-sha-sha was absorbed, and had ceased his interpreting. Deftly Young Wolf moved aside the skins that loosely covered the ropes, but in

another part of the sacred tent, quite away from the crowded entrance. First, one of the medicine ponies was driven between the ropes; another was sent out; now it was Brutus's turn.

With a nod of assurance Young Wolf signalled his friend to be ready. Jack measured his distance, slipped slowly back, and suddenly, with a long leap, a regular "circus spring" learned from the cavalry men of the Seventh, he landed fairly on Brutus's back.

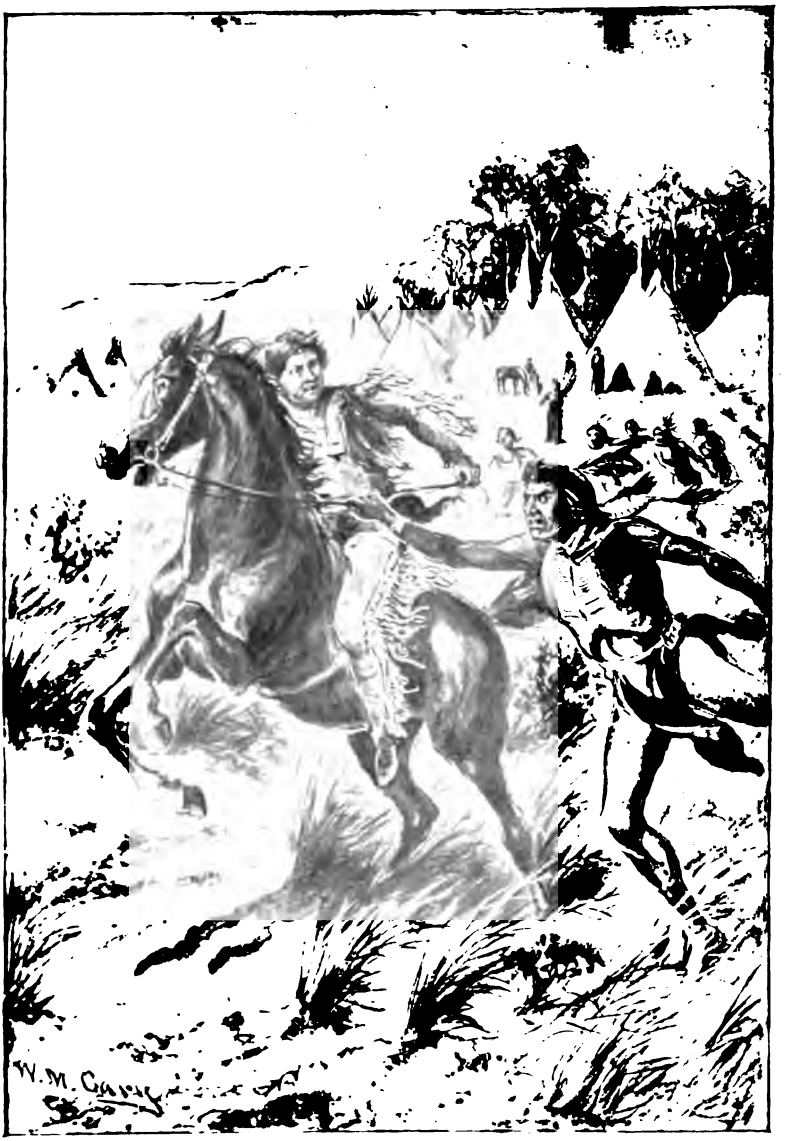
At that Young Wolf let out a startling yell and rushed for the farther side of the tent.

Jack knew it to be a ruse to distract attention. At once he gave an answering cry as he dashed between the ropes—the fierce charge yell of the fighting Seventh.

Brutus cleared the tent with a bound, scattering squaws, children, and dogs as he sprang. Jack headed straight for the dip of the cooley by which he had descended to the plain. But as he did so, a fierce shout sounded close beside him, and Wambli-wa-ku-wa, "Chasing Eagle," the champion runner of the Sioux, dashed upon the fugitive.

Doubling and leaping, the Indian runner actually overtook the racing pony and made one desperate grab for its rider.

Caught by the Indian's headlong clutch, Jack was almost dragged from the saddle, and Brutus, rearing, was checked in his flight.



JACK'S ESCAPE. *Page 182.*

But at that instant came unexpected aid. Roused from his sleep in the wicky-up, where he had been hidden from the inhospitable and disreputable curs of the camp, Duke, the big staghound, knew the charge-yell of his regiment—the Seventh. With a bound he sprang into the open; he spied the flying Brutus; he knew the voice of his boy-friend the rider; he saw the clutch of the vindictive Chasing Eagle.

Gathering himself for one mighty leap, the staghound launched himself straight at the Indian, even as he had been trained to take a stag—not at the throat in front, but from behind.

There was a flash of gray in the air. Then, full upon the back and neck of Chasing Eagle fell the avenging Duke. The Indian's hold relaxed. Dog and man fell to the ground together, and with a cry of victory Jack gave the word to the now excited Brutus, and out of the camp and up the clay-colored "cooley" galloped boy and horse, leaving the victorious Duke master of the field.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW SITTING BULL'S MEDICINE CAME TRUE.

JACK galloped on at a breakneck pace up and down across the rough country until well beyond the Indian encampment. Fortunately he encountered none of the numerous groups of Indians that were continually on the way from the agencies and reservations, from which they had broken out to answer the summons of Sitting Bull and join the muster of the hostiles in the valleys of the Rosebud and the Big Horn.

It was well for Jack that he did dodge these bands, for his Indian dress and lack of Indian speech would have surely brought him into trouble, and no doubt sent him back to captivity, if not to death. Indian admiration for bravery and pluck too often displayed itself in a still further trial of courage and endurance in the fatal test of torture or fire.

But Jack did not ride alone. Less than a mile beyond the camp a pursuer caught up with the boy and, with every expression of delight at the reunion, coursed on beside him. It was the Duke. Evidently he had escaped from his antagonist and the

aroused camp before surprise had given place to attack. For he showed no sign or mark of hurt, and Jack returned the big hound's joyful welcome with words equally appreciative and enthusiastic.

Once out of harm's way, Jack's first jubilation at escape gave place to anxiety. He had no idea where he was; nor did he know which way to go. He had a vague idea that the troops must be somewhere beyond the next creek, branch, or river, and that he must make for a watercourse. But the troops, he knew, had two days' start of him, and which way they had gone, he, in the absence of any familiar landmarks, was unable to decide.

So he turned to the dog for help. He gave the bugle calls, he gave the battle charge, he signalled the "Mount," the "Forward" and said "Troopers, Duke! find 'em, good boy!"

The intelligent hound watched the boy with head cocked on one side and with an attentive ear; he gave a yelp or two, as if in assurance, and then with a few trial sniffs turned about and raced off to the southeast.

"It don't seem to me they can be off that way, Duke, but if you say so, we 'll try," was Jack's comment, and so they trotted on.

The day was warm and bright. The land, broken by buttes and streaked with green valleys, was bright with flowers; myriads of grasshoppers and

moths rose into the air beneath the galloping hoofs of Brutus and the hurrying toes of the Duke, while the familiar little "bunting birds" hopped from the grass or circled about the pony's head, filling their greedy little maws with the fluttering insects that are their prey and food.

Jack held his pace skirting the river, which he supposed to be the Rosebud, and which wound its way northward to the Yellowstone, its broken banks rising into cliffs or stretching into cañons. Once or twice the staghound plunged in to cross, as if he wished to try the farther bank, but the stream was too deep to ford, and Jack rode on along the western bank, catching frequent glimpses of the water through the gaps of cooleys and gullies.

Suddenly the Duke gave a glad cry and made a dash forward; that same instant Jack caught the champ of a cavalry-bit and the creak of saddle-gear, and, rounding a bluff where the seam of a cooley ran down to the river, Jack galloped Brutus straight into a troop of cavalry.

A burly seargent gave a grab at the pony's bridle-rein, bringing him to a sudden halt, whereat the Duke growled ominously. Both he and Jack looked for a different greeting.

"Hi, boys! here 's a prize," cried the sergeant, "a young Injun—on a scout, maybe. Hullo, Johnny! where 'd you come from ?" he demanded

and then added the Indian greeting, "Peace be with my brother."

But the make-believe Indian had used his disguise unwittingly. With the glad shout of welcome with which he had greeted the cavalrymen he had entirely forgotten his Indian masquerading.

"I 'm no Injun," he said. "I can't speak Injun, neither. I 'm a white boy, and this is one of General Custer's dogs."

"White boy be ye?" exclaimed the sergeant. "No! you don't say so. Let 's see how he looks white, boys. Scrub him!"

At once two lanky troopers dragged the boy from the saddle, in spite of his own and the Duke's protests, and, hauling him down the cooley, with a dash of water from the river scrubbed off the stain and paint with which Po-to-sha-sha had metamorphosed the white boy.

Red and spluttering, Jack looked, half in fun, half in anger, into the faces of the laughing cavalrymen.

"Is n't this the Seventh Cavalry?" he demanded. "Don't you know me? I 'm Jack Huntingdon, assistant herder to General Custer, you know."

The sergeant dropped from his saddle, threw his bridle over his arm, and grasping the boy's shoulder peered curiously into his face.

"Well! I 'll be blessed if it ain't!" he said. "Jack Huntingdon, eh? Why, I remember you. You were in the Professor's expedition last summer, were n't you, boy? Don't you remember me —Sergeant Thompson of the Third? No, I was corporal then."

Jack almost flung himself into the big sergeant's arms.

"Why, so it is," he cried. "Well, this is fine. But what 's the Third doing here? Is n't this Custer's advance?"

"Custer nuthin'!" exclaimed the sergeant. "What you thinking of, Jack? There ain't no Custer in sight here. He 's miles off. This is Crook's advance. Where is Custer, anyhow?"

Then Jack understood that the staghound had struck the wrong scent, and instead of leading him toward Reno's scouting party had got on the trail of the Southern column, which, led by General Crook, was coming up from Fort Fetterman to form the southern side of the big, three-cornered net which Terry, Gibbon, and Crook were drawing about the hostile Sioux.

In fact, Sergeant Thompson explained this much, and said that he was the advance of Crook's command, scouting into the Rosebud valley from their last supply camp on Goose Creek.

"Camping place is just ahead, boys," said the

sergeant, studying the signs. "Dismount! The column will be along soon."

Then, sitting on the ground beside his loosely tethered horse, he begged Jack to go ahead and spin his yarn.

"Tell me all about it, Jack," he said. "How under the sun did you get here? Thought you were gettin' your a-b abs off in New York, and here ye be Crazy Horse or Lazy Mule, or, p'r'aps Sitting Bull, for all I know."

Jack spun his yarn, stretched out beside the sergeant, with the Duke's muzzle resting on his knee, and when the main column came up and camp was made, Jack was passed on through the different grades of rank to the General, where, as a *protégé* of Custer, he shared the General's own mess while he told his tale of loss, capture, and escape.

"Up yonder, eh, in this divide, are they?" said the General, after Jack had concluded. "That 's what my scouts thought. If the lazy fellows had n't crammed themselves after their buffalo hunt I 'd have interviewed Mr. Sitting Bull under his own lodge-poles. But 'Injuns is curus,' as you must have found, my boy, and my Crow scouts are the same as all the men. When they take it in their heads to feast, it 's no use trying to get them to scout. So the old Bull boasts he will do me up, does he?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jack; "he 's dreamed you right off the earth."

"Well, dreams go by contraries, you know," said the General. "We 'll take a drive at him to-morrow up the valley, and let him do the rest of his dreaming behind the bars. You 'll have to stay with us, my boy, till we 've made a union with Terry. So that 's one of Custer's stag-hounds, is it? I 've seen some of them"—and Jack and the Duke were made the heroes at the General's mess.

Next morning when "Boots and saddles!" rang out, Jack joined himself to Sergeant Thompson's company, and with a trooper's coat, borrowed to cover his Indian toggery, and with a cavalry hat on his head, he rode on with the advance, which had already been preceded by the Indian scouts—the Crows, sworn enemies to the Sioux,—to "spot" and surprise the camp of the hostiles.

They made some seven miles or so, at slow rate over rough country; then they halted, unsaddled, and waited for the infantry to come up. The Crow scouts were well ahead; the main column joined the advance and were resting before beginning the second seven miles, when, suddenly, across the ridges came the sound of guns, and then, over the hills, the Crow scouts came dashing back pell-mell in confused flight, shouting, "Sioux! Sioux!"

"By George! boys," cried Sergeant Thompson to

his squad. "Them Injuns have caught us napping."

It looked like it. Urged out by that master-plotter Sitting Bull and led by so dashing a war-chief as Crazy Horse the Ogallala, a strong war-party of the hostiles followed the trail along which Jack had fled for his life the day before; and there, in the broken valley between the Chetish and the Rosebud Mountains, with the river flanking them on one side and the bluffs and hills commanding them on the other, the troops of Crook were well-nigh penned and caught by the Sioux.

But the General realized the situation at once. He had been illy served by his unreliable scouts; the halt had been made in the worst possible position in a heavily timbered cañon; the Indians had occupied the commanding position on the heights, corralling the troops almost in a "death hollow"; but Crook was quick to act.

Even while Jack, startled at the danger, remembered Sitting Bull's dream and thought of the bad medicine, the General ordered the trumpeter to sound the advance.

The line of battle was quickly formed, and Mills and Noyes with their battalions went charging up the hills from the right and right centre in gallant style. The Indian onset wavered; but far to the left, where, all unsupported, Colonel Royall and his

men were stationed, the Indian leader spied the white man's weakest spot, and bore down upon that.

" Hi! yip-yip-yip-yip—hi yah! "

It was the yell of the Indian riders as, lashing their ponies and firing their guns, they dashed full-tilt in a furious charge against the centre and the left. But Mills and Noyes broke the charge and drove them back; Royall and his men held them off with steady fire; and, confident of their position, still held the slopes, firing steadily and threatening again and again to charge.

It was a fight wrongly begun; already the Gray Fox was on the defensive where he had counted upon being the aggressor. The Indians had the best of it thus far, and Jack Huntingdon was getting much more than he bargained for—he was seeing a fight, but, as he very much feared, he was seeing it, as he expressed it, " wrong end to."

But General Crook was a man of expedients, and this time he was " out for business," and determined to force the fighting.

" Here, where 's that boy of Custer's ? " he demanded, and Jack was speedily before him.

" Do you know anything about this party ? " he said. " My Crows are n't worth a rap. How far off is that Sioux camp ? "

" Ten or twelve miles, I should say, General," Jack replied.

"Those scouts said six," was the General's disgusted comment. "Can we force it — all the troops?"

"It 's awfully rough country, sir," answered Jack, "and I don't see how you can get the infantry and cavalry through the cañon with all those Injuns watching you. They can just drop right down on you and cut you up. It 's a bad place for an advance with those fellows to dodge — so it seems to me, sir."

The General thanked Jack courteously for his opinion so modestly given, and thought an instant. He turned to one of his staff.

"Countermand that order to Mills and Noyes for an advance on the Indian camp," he said. "We won't risk it yet. Captain Nickerson, can you ride over to Colonel Royall on the left? He 's getting the worst of it."

"All ready, General," was the captain's response, though he knew that ride was a most uneven chance for life.

"Call Royall in," said the General. "Tell him to retire or connect with the main body. Be careful, Captain, it 's a risky ride."

It was, indeed, but Captain Nickerson, saluting, rode straight into the risk. Spurring, dodging, doubling, firing, at times almost surrounded by the Indians who recognized his intention, the brave

captain rode safely through, and Royall ordered his men to fall back.

This was not so easy as it seems. The Indians were pressing close, in overwhelming numbers, but by a left-about wheel Royall cut through the foe, retiring into successive lines of retreat, charging and fighting until he had reached a position where aid could come from the main body.

This was the severest part of the fight; for as Royall's battalion went down into the defile the Sioux swarmed upon them, and it was hand-to-hand for a while. Jack from the height on the other side watched the struggle anxiously. Men fell in the retreat, for a retreat it was; the Indians pressed hard upon the struggling left wing with yells of triumph and a fusillade of musketry.

Then, above the smoke and din of strife, the charge rang out, and Jack hurrahed as he saw two companies of infantry dash out from the main body, and supported by the Snake warriors—foes to all Sioux, and allies of the boys in blue—charge full upon the advancing band of the impetuous Crazy Horse.

This relieved the retreat and checked the rush of the hostiles; but again, from both sides of the "death hollow," the Sioux rode to the attack, and opened a murderous fire upon the troops. Again the infantry and the allies charged, and again the

Sioux, seeing that their prey had escaped, yelled out their defiance and rode back to their former position on the hill.

Then the General realized that he was outnumbered if not outgeneralled; he gave up his plan for an advance, went into camp on the battle-field, and counted up his losses.

They were not small. Nine killed and twenty-one wounded was the result of that sharp and serious encounter, fought on Bunker Hill day—the seventeenth of June, 1876—and known now as the Battle of the Rosebud.

It was a serious drawback to the success of the carefully planned campaign of 1876. For, encumbered with his sick and wounded, without confidence in the ability or vigilance of the Crow scouts, upon whom he depended; uncertain as to the force of Sioux warriors, by whom he was evidently outnumbered, and fearing, indeed, that the whole hostile force might be in his front, General Crook fell back to his permanent camp on Goose Creek, and the first part of Sitting Bull's medicine came true. For, thanks to the wise direction of that wily non-combatant chief and to the gallant leadership of Crazy Horse, the Gray Fox had been trapped, checked, and driven back.

For almost the only time in his long career as a successful Indian fighter, General Crook had been

defeated, and Sitting Bull's dream had come true.

Jack felt that it had, indeed, as, with spirits sadly dashed, he sat about the camp-fire after the battle and confided his disappointment to Sergeant Thompson of the Third.

But that philosophic cavalryman took it all calmly enough.

"Such things come into the best regulated families, Jack," he said, "and I reckon we 've just got to grin and bear it. We ain't whipped, are we? We 're camping here right on our battle-ground, and the Injun has vanished. What more do you want? To ketch 'em? Say, did you ever try to ketch a woodchuck or tree a 'possum? No, 'course not; you 're a city chap. But 't ain't so easy, I can tell you. And we 've only got four days' rations. This is only a scout, anyhow. We 'll get a whack at 'em soon enough to suit you. Eat your grub, and don't growl."

So Jack accepted the inevitable, like the wise boy he was, and made the most of what he had seen as a spectator at a real battle.

"Still," he said, bound to have the last word, in spite of his good-humor. "If it had been General Custer, he 'd done 'em up."

"Yes," grunted Sergeant Thompson, shying his last morsel of hard tack at a skulking coyote who

had sneaked into camp for a bite, " and got done up himself. There 's such a thing as being too headstrong, my boy. The Gray Fox don't take any chance. And them fellers of the Seventh do just think themselves a whole team, and a little dog under the wagon to boot. Just wait till they get into a hole like this."

Next morning, as Jack ascended the bluff where Mills and Noyes had made their first charge in the battle of the Rosebud the day before, and looked off on the valley that lay green and glorious at his feet, he could see scarce a sign of life. The Indians had left for parts unknown.

Not far away a few tenantless tepees showed the haste of the Indian withdrawal, and Jack was tempted, with his usual heedlessness, to go down and investigate. So, with the Duke at his heels, he walked slowly down the cooley and crossed the trampled grass which marked the Indian trail.

He drew aside the flap of the first mushroom-colored tepee very cautiously, and peeped in. As the light sifted through the opening, Jack started in alarm, for in the enclosure, full before him, lay the dead body of an Indian warrior, while stretched near it was what looked like another victim of the fight.

Instinctively Jack drew back, just a bit startled and horrified. But the Duke was not so sensitive.

Giving a quick yelp of recognition, he brushed past Jack's retreating legs and darted into the tepee.

Jack turned in again to order the hound out, but, as he did so, the second recumbent form, wakened by the dog's caress, stretched itself, turned over and sat up, and Jack was made well-nigh speechless to recognize in the awakened and apparently resurrected warrior—Po-to-sha-sha, the squaw-man.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW THE DUKE JOINED THE PACK.

"PO-TO-SHA-SHA!"

Jack's exclamation of surprise shot out almost like a challenge; the squaw-man sat up and blinked his sleepy eyes.

"Well, I vum, sonny!" he drawled out; "is that you? I thought it was the Bull calling me."

"Were you in the fight?" demanded Jack, eagerly.

"Was I in the fight? Well, I—say! look here, sonny," the squaw-man said, "will you kindly go over me carefully and see if all my bones are where they ought to be? Was I in the fight? Ask Turning Bear, here—O, you can't—he 's dead. Well, he and I were right under those infantry boots when they and the Snakes charged down on us, and—well, there! Big Tooth, I don't really know which is the dead Injun—me or Turning Bear, yonder."

"Are you badly wounded, Red Top?" inquired Jack, concerned for the bodily welfare of his odd friend. "Can you walk up to the camp? I 'll let

the doctor see you. Or, I 'll get him to come down here if you 're hurt too much to walk."

The squaw-man rose slowly to his feet.

" Well, I don't seem to be bleeding anywhere, do I, sonny ?" he drawled; " and I can't just feel anything real broken. No; you 're a good fellow, but I don't want any sawbones practicing on me. I 'll get back home, and Mi-mi will fix me up. She 's better 'n a whole caboodle of doctors."

He shook himself vigorously as a last test of his entirety.

" No; looks as though I was all right," he said. " I thought I was killed, sure, but I reckon I ain't. We mighty nigh licked you fellows, did n't we, Big Tooth ? That was Sitting Bull's picnic. Say, sonny, what do you say to the Bull's medicine-making now ?"

" O, it only happened so," answered Jack. " If General Crook's scouts had only been wide-awake, we 'd have bagged the whole lot of you."

" Yes, that 's just it, don't you know, sonny," retorted Po-to-sha-sha; " the Bull's medicine just tied 'em all up, so that they could n't see anything."

" O, come, Red Top! You don't believe that, do you ?" cried Jack. " Who was your chief, Sitting Bull ?"

" No, no, boy; have n't I told you the Bull don't

fight?" the renegade replied. "He just sets the others on, tells 'em what to do, and stays in his own tepee and says 'Stubboy!' just like you do to that dog. No; Cho-on-ka Wit-ko led us. That 's Crazy Horse, the Ogallala, you know. Rousing smart young fellow, he is, too, I tell you. Chief Gall wanted to lead, but he and Young Wolf are rounding up some of the other hostiles. I reckon your Gray Fox had better skedaddle, if he wants to keep his scalp. The Bull 's got a whole slew of braves coming in to help him."

"How was it you did n't get off with the rest of the Injuns?" queried Jack.

Po-to-sha-sha hesitated a bit. Then he said, slowly, "Why, you see, Big Tooth, I thought first I was killed; and then, when I found it was Turning Bear, here, and not me that was done for, I just set to and dragged him in here to keep till called for—and here I stayed. 'Cause, you see, Turning Bear is Sitting Bull's cousin, and the chief will be mighty sorry about him."

"Now, see here, Red Top," said quick-witted Jack, who had studied the squaw-man's face closely as he gave his explanation, "was that the reason you stayed behind—honest, now, was it?—or did the sight of Uncle Sam's soldiers set you to thinking of old times and home and all that, and just make you feel that you 'd like to give up being an

Injun and come back to civilization again, like a white man ?"

The renegade looked upon the boy in bewilderment. Through the bronze hue of sun and storm there burned on his cheek the flush of self-conviction.

" See here, sonny," he said, " are you turning medicine-man, too ? Can you read my thoughts just as Sitting Bull can ? By gracious! boy,"—and he strode up to Jack and caught that young mind-reader by the shoulder—" that 's just what did come over me—just that "—his voice sank to a whisper—" and that 's why I 'm here."

" I knew it," cried Jack, delighted to think that he had made so good a guess, and that he might reclaim an American citizen. " I 'm mighty glad "; he caught the squaw-man's hand. " Come along up to the camp," he continued, dragging Po-to-sha-sha to the door of the tepee; " let me introduce you to the sergeant. He 'll fix you up all right and treat you like a white man."

" Sergeant who ? " queried Po-to-sha-sha, almost yielding himself to the boy's persistent pull.

" Why, Sergeant Jim Thompson of the Third Cavalry," Jack replied. " He 's a mighty good fellow."

With a wrench the renegade tore himself from the boy's persuasive hand, dashed from the tent and

fled like the wind, as if an enemy were upon him.

Jack stood an instant, sorely perplexed.

"Why! what under the sun"—he began, and then he, too, darted from the tent and, followed by the bounding Duke, raced after the renegade.

"Hey! Red Top; Red Top. Hold up; hold up!" he called. "What 's the matter?"

The squaw-man halted and waited for the boy to come up, looking anxiously, meantime, toward the hill that separated them from the camp of the soldiers.

"Did you say Thompson, boy—Jim Thompson?" he asked, turning a troubled, almost pathetic look on Jack.

"Yes, Sergeant Jim Thompson of the Third Cavalry," Jack replied.

"Say! did he fight in the war?" inquired the squaw-man.

"What, in the last war? Why, yes," Jack replied. "He 's told me lots of rattling good war stories. He was in the—the—let 's see!—the Fifty——"

"Fifty-Seventh Ohio? Corporal of Company K?" broke in the squaw-man.

"Why, yes, that 's it," cried Jack, in great surprise. "How did you know? Did you know him? Were you——"

"Well, so long, sonny," said Po-to-sha-sha, interrupting the boy's questions. "I reckon the fever 's off me now. I 'll go back to Mi-mi."

But Jack could not let him go.

"Why, did you know Jim Thompson?" he repeated the question. "Come along, I want you to see him. He 'll be awfully glad," and Jack caught the renegade by the arm as if to forcibly detain him.

But the strong man threw the boy off hurriedly.

"Let me go, boy," he said, almost fiercely. "I won't see Jim Thompson. I don't know him. I won't see any of those Injun-killers over the hill. I 'm an Injun, I am. I go back to my brothers—and to Mi-mi. So long, Big Tooth."

And without once looking back, without another word, Po-to-sha-sha the squaw-man hurried along the well-marked Indian trail, and was soon lost to sight amid the timber and undergrowth of the fertile Rosebud valley.

But Jack Huntingdon stood still,—amazed, distressed, defeated.

"Well! he 's the most curious chap I ever did come across," he said at last, unable to fathom it all. Then, turning slowly, he retraced his steps, and, followed by the Duke, crossed over the hill to the camp.

All there was in confusion—but orderly confusion, as befitted a military camp. Tents were being struck;

horses were saddled; the wounded were being made as comfortable as possible in ambulances and army wagons. The retreat to the base of supplies at Goose Creek was evidently about to begin.

Sergeant Thompson hailed the boy at once.

"See here, Jack; what under the sun are you up to?" he sang out. "I 've been looking for you everywhere. The General wants to see you."

Jack turned to report at headquarters; but, as he did so, he caught at the busy soldier's arm.

"Sergeant," he said, "do you know Po-to-sha-sha?"

"Who the dickens is he?" cried the sergeant, stopping in his stride. "Po-to-sha-sha? Sounds like an Injun. No, I don't know him. Is he one of the Crow scouts?"

"No," returned Jack; "he 's that squaw-man I was telling you about, in Sitting Bull's village. I 've just seen him again. He says he knows you."

"Very likely. I 've left my mark on more 'n one of 'em," said the sergeant.

"No, not here; I don't mean here," persisted Jack. "He says he knew you in the Fifty-Seventh Ohio, during the war."

"Po-to-sha-sha—squaw-man," mused the sergeant, shaking his head. "What 's his name in American?"

"I don't know," said Jack disconsolately. "He

never would tell me what it was. But I know, from what he said, that he was with you in the Fifty-Seventh Ohio."

"That 's my old regiment, sure, Jack," said the sergeant. "But I can't tell who the fellow is, unless I hear his real name. Where is he?"

"Skedaddled to the Injuns," replied Jack, wrathfully. "He skipped as soon as he heard your name."

"Mighty curious," said the sergeant. "What have I done to frighten him? No, I don't know who it is, unless—but here, say, Jack, you just git, double-quick, too! Did n't I tell you the General wants to see you?"

Jack hurried away, still in much perplexity; he was wondering what the sergeant's "unless" could have meant. But the next moment General Crook's communication quite drove Po-to-sha-sha from his mind.

"My boy," said the General, "I 'm going to send a courier and one of my scouts to find Reno or Custer or General Terry. I want to communicate this change of plan. I expect you 'd better join the General, too. I 'm afraid he 'll worry about you—you and the dog—if you don't get to him."

"O! thank you, General," said Jack. "I would like to join him; but I was afraid I could n't because I don't know the trail."

"Well, the scout will catch him," replied the General. "He 's nearer from this point than he will be from Goose Creek, so you 'd better go along. The men start at once. So, saddle and mount, and be off with them. Good-bye! My regards to General Custer. And don't you try being an Indian again. An American boy is worth more to humanity and his country than a Sioux. Besides, your hair 's too short. Tell Custer to see that he brings up that camp. I 'd do it now, if I had rations and outfit enough."

The General shook Jack's hand warmly—not because he was Jack, nor yet because he was an "assistant herder," but because he was in a certain way a *protégé* of Custer's. For all army men, despite their occasional jealousies and heart-burnings, do have more of the spirit of comradeship than most men, and look upon their "friend's friend" as theirs. Then, too, General Crook had taken quite a fancy to Jack Huntingdon—most people were drawn to the boy, for all his scatter-brained ways,—and while really glad to be rid of the care of the lad, he was also really sorry to have him go.

But to Jack Huntingdon this was only another of his always welcome new experiences, and in ten minutes he had bade good-bye to Sergeant Thompson and the "boys," was astride Brutus, and had joined the scout and the courier, forded the Rose-

bud and headed north to strike the trail of Reno or of General Custer himself. And the Duke was trotting contentedly beside him.

All day long they rode—across fair valleys and verdant bottom-lands, through rock-walled cañons and defiles, past rounded butte and climbing peak. It was broken country, the most of it, three thousand feet and more above the sea—that seamed and wind-swept plateau region between the Rosebud and the Tongue.

At last, on the afternoon of the second day, Jack gave a cry of recognition. He knew where he was. They had struck the very bluff, from which first, by the side of Po-to-sha-sha, he had seen the Lodge-pole trail as it traversed the valley of the Rosebud. And, sure enough, soon after, they struck the trail of Reno, curving in a great loop over and along the Tongue.

Then there came a difference of opinion. The scout was certain that Reno's trail must have retraced itself and gone back to the supply camp on the Powder, from which it had started; while Jack believed that, if Major Reno had not reported to Custer, the General, who was in haste to push ahead, would have galloped across country, along the Yellowstone or away from it, to find the expected signs of the hostiles. In that case, Jack reasoned, he ought not to be so very far away, and

by going north they would, he felt sure, run across the General's trail.

But, of course, as between a boy from New York and a half-breed scout who knows the country, the boy's opinion went for little—even though the boy knew the temper of the General better than the scout.

So the courier sided with the scout, and the trail was laid for the fords of the Tongue and the mouth of the Powder River; and Jack, while inwardly rebellious, was outwardly agreeable, and rode blithely on with the majority.

But there was one member of the party whose advice was not asked, and who, yet, had an opinion not to be slighted—Duke, the staghound.

They had not gone many miles up the Tongue—where, just ahead, as the scout said, there was a good ford—when the big staghound began to be restless and to run far afield.

Jack called him to heel again and again, but at last he decided to yield to the Duke's desires and follow his lead.

"I wonder what under the sun the Duke's got on his mind," he said. "I would n't wonder but he scents game. I 'm just going to follow him a piece and see."

The boy's companions objected to thus giving in to the hound; indeed, so far as they dared, they

ordered the boy to stay by them and not leave the trail. But Jack, as you have learned, was inclined to be obstinate on occasion, and had grown accustomed to following the Duke's lead as well as the impulses and desires of young Jack Huntingdon.

"All right, boy," said the half-breed scout; "you go that way; we go this; you get lost, not our fault. Go on; you be sorry, Misser Jack. Then you strike back for the river. Strike it five miles up; 'nother ford there where little creek comes in. Don't be long; then we wait for you there. Look out for Injuns, and show Red Cloud's feather."

Jack waved his hand in response to these final directions, backed Brutus away from the ford, and wheeling about followed the lead of the Duke, much to that wise hound's delight.

The Duke ran straight on now with his nose in air, dropping it only for a few minutes, if in fault. The wind blew straight toward him, and Jack was certain that the hound scented something.

"What is it, Duke, old fellow?" he said, encouragingly, "elk or buffalo?"

It was neither; for, in ten minutes, the Duke broke into a long, loud bay, which seemed first to bring its echo from the hills and cliffs. But this was soon found by the boy to be no echo, but an answering cry from other dogs up the wind.

"Now what 's he struck—an Injun village, I

wonder?" queried the boy. "See here, Mr. Jack Huntingdon, here 's just the time to watch out, if you don't want to tumble into trouble. Here, Duke! Come back; come back, sir!" he ordered. "To heel, Duke; to heel!"

But the Duke knew better than the boy. He turned an instant, whimpered his objections, and then, throwing his nose in air again, flatly disobeyed.

With a long, loud bay, he broke across the bottom-land, breasted a bluffy rise, darted down a cooley, and disappeared.

Jack followed cautiously but at good speed; then just as he was slipping down the cooley, he heard the Duke's glad bark and the answering music of other dogs in welcome. There came a voice he knew right well.

"What, the Duke? Where did you come from, old chap? Where 's Jack?"

Jack hesitated no longer. He raced Brutus down the cooley and dashed into a troop of cavalrymen with the headquarters flag in the lead. He knew the advance guard; he knew the personal flag; better still he knew at once the lithe, tall figure in buckskin riding at the head. It was General Custer.

As for the Duke, he was jubilant in his satisfaction with himself. He had joined the pack.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHY BRUTUS LOST HIS HEAD.

"NO! Jack Huntingdon? Is it you?" cried the General. "Are you scalped? Did you turn Injun, or are you a reformed deserter? Here I 've been worrying myself gray over you, and Autie Reed is all broke up. Come, give an account of yourself."

Jack did so, hurriedly but earnestly.

"Well! that comes of wandering," said the General, when the boy had concluded. "For goodness sake, Jack, keep in line, or you 'll get out once too often. Talk about an assistant herder! Why, boy, we 'll have to detail a special herder to round you up and keep you in line. Saw Crook, did you? And was in his fight, too. Why, Jack, you are seeing life. Did he send any word to me?"

Jack told the General of the courier and the scout, and the General chuckled greatly over the fact that, as he said, "just a plain, common, every-day boy, and a civilian herder at that," had got the lead of a courier of the Regulars and one of Crook's Crow scouts. "Why, Jack," he said, laughingly,

" you 'll be outranking us all yet. I think you 've rather got the call on Autie Reed, eh ? He 'll be green with envy. But I 'll get even with you. I 'll let him be in my fight, while you 're off scouting somewheres—you and the Duke here. Good boy, the Duke, eh, Jack ? I don't know but he 's the chap that 'll outrank us all, as scout and Injun fighter. I 'd have given my best cavalry boots to have seen him pull down that Injun runner. Come to heel, Duke. You 're king of the pack, old chap."

The General rode at the head of his troop, like the splendid horseman and gallant cavalier he was. In his suit of beaver-fringed buckskin, his big sombrero and his long cavalry boots, he looked every inch the soldier, and needed only the long, floating blond locks that once had swept his shoulders and fixed his personality with the Indians (who called him sometimes " Chief Long Hair " and sometimes the " White Chief with the Yellow Hair ") to be the Custer of romance and song, the Custer of the Valley, the Custer of the Grand Review at Washington, and the Custer of those later Indian campaigns which had gained him friends and foes, both red and white, and had left him alike hero and terror to the Indians, who equally, in and out of the agencies, feared and hated him. But as General Custer rode across the Valley of the Rosebud in that fatal cam-

paign of 1876, like Samson shorn of his locks, he seemed to have lost something of that matchless personality which had made him the *beau sabreaur* of the Army of the Potomac, the central and popular figure of the Indian wars.

Clinking and champing, the command moved down into the Valley of the Rosebud, and across that broken, fertile stretch of flowery green. Once again Jack gave a shout of recognition as he noticed, standing bare and stripped, the sacred pole and sagging ropes of the big sun-dance tent from which, thanks to Young Wolf and Brutus, he had made his successful dash for life. Near by he saw the wicky-ups left vacant by the retiring Indian assemblage, whose ponies had nibbled the valley clean, and who themselves had scurried away to other parts.

Trusting to the Duke's recollection, intelligence, and scent, Jack followed the hound on a hunt for the wicky-up in which Po-to-sha-sha had ambushed the Duke and Brutus, and had hidden Jack's campaigning suit ere he led the make-believe Indian lad into the sacred tent. Sure enough, the knowing hound, divining the boy's desire, speedily discovered the wicky-up, and, poking among the bushes, Jack recovered with much joy his own original suit. Thereupon he discarded the somewhat tattered and ill-fitting combination suit in which he had been travelling during his days of roaming, and soon came

out to join the General, " clothed and in his right mind," as he declared.

" Well, Jack, you do look like another fellow, and that 's a fact," the General exclaimed as he " stood off " the restored Jack; " now you look like my assistant herder again. I shall ride on with the advance a bit; you wait here till Autie Reed comes up with the pack-train. Report to Lieutenant Mathey; he 's Officer of the Herd now."

Jack obeyed, and as the long file of mounted men, troop after troop, came riding up, followed by the laden pack-train (detached from the supply-camp for this especial advance, and carrying rations for fifteen days), he was soon shaking hands with Autie Reed and telling again the story of his adventures.

Autie, on his part, detailed the happenings of the campaign since Jack rode away with Reno's scouting party, from the camp on the Powder River. He told Jack how they had marched away to the mouth of the Tongue, there to await Reno's report; how word came at last from the captain of the lodge-pole trail up the Rosebud and of Jack's disappearance; how General Custer had gone with General Terry to confer with General Gibbon of the " Montana column," on board the *Far West*, the fussy little steamer which had poked its way up the Yellowstone, and how, there, it was arranged in just what manner the campaign should be made.

The plan was, so Autie told Jack—for he had heard it all talked over—for General Gibbon to move south up the Big Horn Valley with his Montana column, while Custer, with the Seventh Cavalry and his scouts, was to ride up the Rosebud and get the lay of the Indian trail.

If he found it he was still to bear away to the south so as to cut off the Indians and wait for Gibbon's column, or perhaps for Crook's, to come up. Then the united forces were to close in and corral the whole hostile outfit, and capture or attack it.

"But I 'll tell you, Jack, if Uncle Autie" (for so Autie Reed always called his uncle, the General, whose namesake he was) "if Uncle Autie ever sees those Injuns as near as that, he 's not going to wait. He 's going to pitch in and whip 'em. It 's the only thing to do. He 's bound to show those folks in Washington who tried to down him, that 'Custer's luck' is as good as ever, and that the Seventh can whip the world. That 's the talk, eh? I reckon we 're good for all the Injuns we can find, anyhow. Why, we 're six hundred strong. I don't believe they 've got more than ten or twelve hundred, have they?"

Jack could not really tell.

"It seemed as if there were lots more than that when I was in the thick of it," he replied. "But,

don't you see, Autie, they had lots of squaws and boys with 'em, so I can't tell about numbers. But I guess this force—and General Custer—are big enough for all the warriors Sitting Bull can rake and scrape. Where 's General Terry, Autie, and where are the Gatlings ?"

"He stayed at headquarters, up on the Yellowstone," said Autie, "or else he 's gone with Gibbon, I don't know which. You see, Jack, Uncle Autie wanted to go alone—just with his own folks, as you know he calls the Seventh. General Terry wanted him to take along the Gatling battery and a battalion of the Second Cavalry, but the General would n't have 'em. 'We just want harmony on this campaign,' I heard him tell Uncle Tom and Captain Keogh; 'strangers will be sure to cause jealousy,' he said, 'and the Gatlings are more bother than they 're worth. We 'll just show the country, Tom,' he says to Uncle Tom Custer, 'that the Seventh Cavalry can whip any force that can come against it. If we can't, no other regiment can, and so there 's no use in reinforcing us.' That 's the talk, ain't it, Jack ? I tell you, Uncle Autie knows what he can do."

"That 's so," assented Jack, with enthusiasm; "you see General Crook got caught down in the Rosebud because his scouts were no good; they got him into that box. But your uncle—our General—

knows a thing or two. He 'll just march with his eyes open, scouts or no scouts."

"You can just bet he will," cried Autie Reed. "All I 'm afraid of is, that there won't be any fight. That won't be fair, Jack, will it—if you see one and I don't?"

"That 's so," Jack assented. "We both ought to have a whack at them, Autie. Perhaps I 'll have two. Then I 'll tell you which fights Injuns the best—Crook or Custer."

Whereat Autie Reed sniffed indignantly. "As if there were any comparison, Jack," he said—"of course, for a boy in the Seventh Cavalry, I mean," he added.

It was at sundown on the twenty-fourth of June when the command went into camp, in the shadow of a bluff near Tulloch's Creek. The orders were to be ready to march at midnight; for, if the Ree scouts found any "hot signs" of hostiles, the General wished to make a forced march and surprise their village at night. All fires and lights were ordered out, so that no warning of the approach of the troops should reach the Indians. A council of officers was, however, held at the General's bivouac, where, around a small and solitary candle-light in the headquarters tent, the details were discussed—for, so Jack understood, the scouts had finally come in and had reported that the trail of the hostiles led

across the divide to the Little Big Horn River, a tributary to the Big Horn, which itself flows into the Yellowstone.

"We must get as near to that divide as we can by daylight, gentlemen," Jack heard General Custer say. "Then we 'll lay hidden under the bluffs all day, and before daylight next morning—that 'll be the twenty-sixth—the day Terry is to connect with us —we 'll scale that bluff and charge their village before they know what o'clock it is, just as we raided Black Kettle's camp on the Washita. That 's our programme, it seems to me, and we 'll give Master Sitting Bull a dose he won't soon forget or need to take again."

At midnight Jack was roused from his saddle-pillow, and found the regiment in motion. The march had begun. It was hard enough marching by day over that uneven ground. At night it was still more fatiguing. At daylight on the twenty-fifth, a halt was made for coffee; then the silent, tedious march was resumed; but all pressed eagerly on, for they felt that the enemy was near. At noon the dividing ridge between the Rosebud and the Little Big Horn was reached. There they halted, and there Custer changed his mind.

"We never can do this thing in the dark, gentlemen," the General said to his officers. "We must climb the ridge, and charge down on them by day-

light, and I propose to do it now. We can't wait for Terry and Gibbon. We can't herd the hostiles in this region. We 've just got to go in and drive them down toward Gibbon. Then we 've got them. The situation just forces the fight, it seems to me, and we can do nothing but attack. So I propose to fight now."

As had been agreed at the council at the bivouac, the command was to be divided into three battalions, which were to move against the hostiles in three separate columns. At the foot of the bluffs where he had halted his regiment, Custer now prepared to make this division of his forces.

" Major Reno," he said, " you will take troops M, A, and G, and the Indian scouts. Captain Benteen, you will take troops H, D, and K. Captain McDougall, you will keep the rear with troop B as escort to the pack-train, of which Lieutenant Mathey will remain in charge. I 'll take the five other troops—I, F, C, E, and L. Lieutenant Cook will accompany me as adjutant. Major Reno will lead the advance and take the centre of the line; Benteen will take the left, and I 'll take the right and flank them. McDougall and the pack-train will bring up the rear. In that way, when we get to the ridge, we can move to the right and left in three separate columns, each one about two miles from the next, sweep westward over the bluffs, and

so get them between us and crush or corral them. As for you, Autie," he said, turning to his nephew, " you come with me. I promised your mother I 'd keep you near me. But I can't have two rapscallion boys to look after. See here, Jack, you 'll have to stay with Captain McDougall and help the lieutenant with the pack-train. Perhaps, Mac, you 'll need to communicate with Reno or Benteen; if you do, send Jack. He 's had experience. He 'll know how to ride swift, straight, and sure. All ready, gentlemen ? To your commands. Forward! "

Jack chafed under these final orders. Autie Reed openly winked at him.

" What did I tell you, Jack ? " he said, gleefully. " It 's my turn now. I 'm going to be in this thing. You can stay behind with these two: forty mules. Herd 'em well, boy. I want to find 'em all here when I come back to the rear with a string of prisoners. I shall be hungry enough to eat up all that 's left of those fifteen days' rations."

He gave Jack a good-bye nudge in the ribs, like the active, boyish boy he was, and galloped on to join troop C, his uncle, Captain Tom Custer's command.

And Jack, without a word, dropped back into his place beside Lieutenant Mathey, the Officer of the Herd—although " the herd " itself, you will under-

stand, was back at the supply camp. Only the picked pack-mules were the "encumbrance" on this march in fighting trim. Jack Huntingdon was learning the first duty of a soldier—to obey orders; so without a word, save his cheery "Good-bye and good luck!" he dropped to his place as, with fluttering guidons and the rattle of scabbard and harness, the three columns started out, with the trumpeters at the head of each battalion beside their chiefs.

Then they climbed the ridge and marched into history.

Jack swallowed his disappointment, and riding beside the patient, stolid pack-train, slowly breasted the ridge, which dipped down and then up into another, and yet another rise of broken country that still hid the valley on the farther side. The command was marching in three columns, as ordered, with the last dividing crest of the bluffs before them—Benteen to the left, Reno in the centre, Custer to the right, the pack-train plodding on far to the rear of the central battalion. Then Jack, knowing that Custer would be far up the ridge ere they could reach it, begged Captain McDougall's permission to ride ahead for a last salute to Autie Reed and the General's battalion. It was granted, and Jack dashed ahead.

He saw the main column skirt the hill; he could make out, in the bright sunlight of that fair June

Sunday, the Indian-tanned, beaver-trimmed, buck-skin coats of Custer, the General; of his brother, Captain Tom; and of Captain Keogh, who rode his splendid sorrel, Comanche. They made a vivid bit of color in the sun, and Jack thought, as he watched them, what soldierly-looking leaders they were.

He saw them gallop along the ridge, where the trail wound off to the Greasy Grass. Suddenly, he saw one of the Ree scouts spring to the General's side and point off toward the valley; then he saw the General rein in his Kentucky thoroughbred, push back his big hat and peer forward, following the scout's hand.

Jack knew what the General saw. He, too, had seen the same fair scene himself—the broad, flat, fertile valley of the Greasy Grass—known to us as the Little Big Horn—knee-deep in flowers and shimmering with waving grass, from its fringe of cottonwoods and willows beside the fast-flowing river to the high, circling, dun-colored bluffs that rampart it about.

But Jack, even in his imagination, did not see all that Custer saw. It was a sight to thrill the Indian fighter's heart, to fire the soldier's pride. The General rose in his stirrups; looked back toward his men; back over the rolling, tiresome trail he had come; back, almost, as Jack imagined, to where the boy stood watchful and impatient.

He saw someone, at any rate, whether or not it was the boy's silent figure, Jack could never say; but, snatching off his big sombrero, the General swung it above his head in sheer delight and in full anticipation of victory. He shouted out in joy,—the wind blowing toward Jack wafted the words so far that the boy could just catch their note of exultation, and respond with a cheer.

"Hurrah, boys!" cried the General. "Custer's luck! The biggest Indian village on the continent. Forward!"

Then he rode on. And where the trail turned and the clay cliffs overtop it he was lost to view—he and his gallant battalion. It was Jack's last sight in life of the brave and valiant General Custer. What follows is tragedy.

Jack turned and rode back to rejoin the pack-train. Scarcely had he done so, when, with a clatter and a clash, a courier came spurring down the cooley with orders to Captain McDougall to hurry up the pack-train and ammunition, for the General had found the village.

"The General begs, Captain," said the courier, "that you send word to Major Reno that the extra ammunition will be hurried forward for him also. He has sent orders to Major Reno to push ahead into the valley, ford the stream, and attack the northern end of the village while he charges it from

CUSTER SEES THE INDIAN CAMP.

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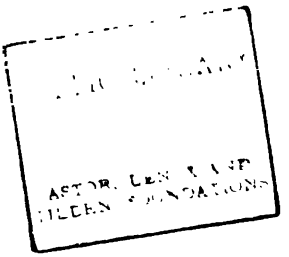

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

the east. Major Reno will wish to locate the reserve ammunition. Will you send him word?"

McDougall said he would, and speedily Jack was urging Brutus after the middle of the three battalions where Major Reno led the central advance.

Jack spurred over the bluff, and following the trail beside Sundance Creek, came upon Major Reno's battalion just below where the Sundance joins the Little Big Horn River. The column had halted to water the horses; some were still drinking, others were fording the rapid, shallow stream, or had reformed on the farther side. There Jack saw Major Reno, and delivered the General's order.

"All right, Jack," he said; "we 've seen some Injuns already, but they got out of our way. I 'll follow and attack, as the General says. You just ride across to him—he 's over the divide and just beyond that first line of bluffs—and tell him I 've got everything in front of me so far, but I 'm afraid the enemy is strong. Can you take that message, Jack? Or, hold on, you 're detailed with McDougall, are n't you? I 'd better send one of my own men. Here, Corporal Curtis—" The corporal saluted; Major Reno gave him the message he had first entrusted to Jack; the corporal galloped off—and, just by that narrow margin, did Jack Huntingdon fail of being one at Custer's last rally.

The Major kept Jack by him, however, that he

might see where his line of attack lay, and so be able to establish some point for the pack-mules and extra ammunition to reach. For a half-mile beyond the river he moved in columns of fours; then, forming in line of battle, he marched another mile, and then deployed his skirmish line.

More and more Indians appeared on Reno's front, but as they did nothing but retreat, now and then firing a shot, the Major kept steadily on along the beautiful valley.

He had just noted a spot under the cottonwoods where he thought the packs could safely be held, when suddenly on the left flank of his line, toward the bluffs, where the Ree scouts rode, there came a quick, increasing, startling clamor:

"Hi! yip-yip-yip-yip—hi yah!"

Jack knew it at once. He had heard it before. It was the charge yell of the Strong Hearts of the Uncapapa Sioux.

Rounding the turn in the trail, the troopers saw a startling sight. There, in full view, stretching far to the southern end of the valley, two miles and more away, lay the great tent village of the assembled Sioux. Then it was that Reno knew what Custer learned too late, that the Seventh Cavalry was confronted by the complete force of the hostiles of the Sioux nation and their allies—five thousand against five hundred.

Again the shrill, ear-piercing charge of the Strong Hearts rang out, and straight upon Reno's left, where the Ree scouts turned and fled as they heard the yell of their feared and hated foe, came the Uncapapa horsemen with a resistless dash.

As the fierce charge broke the line of scouts and sent the unreliable Rees flying for the river, the onset broke Reno's left and drove it back, for a moment throwing his whole line into confusion. Battle line and skirmish line were alike shattered, and, as stricken with terror, the flying Rees lashed their ponies into retreat, yelling vociferously to urge them on, three of them drove straight at Jack and forced him to turn also. But, until the order came from the Major to turn, Jack would not retreat. He was not " built that way," he declared.

Instead, he wheeled his pony around to force him into the cavalry formation. But Brutus, usually staid and obedient, was altogether upset by the shrieking Rees and their plunging ponies. Uncertain as to just the desire of his rider and furiously bumped again by a galloping Ree deserter, the pony completly lost his head, took the bit in his teeth and, head up and tail up, stopped not for rein, command, or cavalry formation, but dashed, with Jack upon his back, full into the now aroused and surging camp of the hostile Sioux.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN CHIEF GALL'S OWN TEPEE.

THE sight of that fiery, charging pony with the white boy on its back, at first led the Indians to believe that a general charge had been ordered, and that in an instant the whole cavalry would be thundering upon them. But when they saw that the white boy rode alone, they looked upon it as a deed of valor—the feat of a young warrior of the Long-Swords who thus challenged and charged the whole hostile host as a "dare." If he came out alive, he could make a mighty "boast," and to do that, was, as you know, one of the great desires of the Sioux warrior.

Out of sheer admiration for his pluck and courage, they let the boy gallop unmolested, and actually opened their ranks to give him passage. Then, as suddenly they closed about him, and Jack's span of life would have been brief had not one agile young warrior sprung in, before the murderous, knotted war-club, brandished by one fierce and yelling rider, could fall upon the boy's head.

"It is Big Tooth, the Strong Heart!" the young

warrior cried. "Strike him not; he is Young Wolf's blood-brother."

Then seizing the bridle of the now over-spent Brutus, the red boy covered the white boy with his body, and Jack Huntingdon readily yielded himself prisoner to Young Wolf the Uncapapa.

Very deftly and cleverly did Young Wolf draw his friend out of the press of yelling, struggling warriors and through the tepee village. The fact was, while the Sioux knew of Custer's advance, this sudden appearance of Reno was a surprise, and for a time they were more inclined to fly than to fight. Only for an instant, however; for as they saw Major Reno stagger back and stand indecisive after the first onset, they turned again to the attack, and inspired by the shouts of Chief Gall, who rushed in to lead them with the cry, "The white chief is scared. Strike for your homes and your children!" they bore down upon Major Reno and drove his men, in a mad flight for life, racing for the bluffs.

So Jack and Young Wolf were, for the time, unnoticed in the tumult, and the Indian lad, urging the ponies to the outer edge of his own village of tents, stopped suddenly before one of the tepees.

"Down, Big Tooth; quick!" he cried. "Leave pony. Get into tepee. It is Chief Gall's own. There Big Tooth is safe."

"Great Scott! Young Wolf; but that was a nar-

row squeak," cried Jack, greatly relieved, when once within the safe seclusion of Chief Gall's own tepee. "I did n't figure to be in that scrimmage at all. I would n't be here now, if my pony had n't run away with me."

"Young Wolf saw that," the young Indian replied. "That why Big Tooth saved. But—what doing here, with soldiers, in Uncapapa lodges? Tell Young Wolf," he demanded, judicially.

"Why, you see, I had just come with a message to Major Reno," Jack explained. "I 'm with the pack-train, you see. I 'm what they call a civilian —a non-combatant, to-day," he went on. "That keeps me out of the fight. But your fellows charged the Rees and scattered 'em before we knew what you were at. Healthy lot of boys, those Rees!"

"Ugh! The Ree is a squaw—a coffee-cooler," Young Wolf ejaculated, contemptuously.

"Well, you see," continued Jack, "when they stampeded, they came ker-slap against Brutus. He lost his head, like a fool, and dashed off in the wrong direction, of course; and here I am—your prisoner. Going to stake me out, Young Wolf?"

The young Indian smiled broadly.

"Big Tooth and Young Wolf friends," he said, "brothers. Big Tooth no prisoner, he guest. This tent is his until Young Wolf can get him free."

"That 's awfully good of you," exclaimed Jack,

grasping Young Wolf's hand; "but I 'm afraid it 's not so easy. There 's a big fight on, I think. Perhaps I can do you a good turn, Young Wolf. There 's no knowing how it 's going to turn out."

"The Uncapapas and their brothers are like the stars in the sky," declared the young Indian. "Can the Long-Swords hope to stand against so many?"

"Well," said honest Jack, "they can, if General Custer leads 'em; and he 's going to. He 's up on the bluffs somewhere."

Young Wolf nodded.

"Our scouts tracked him," he said. "They marked his trail. But it is not Long Hair who leads. It is a chief with no scalp-locks."

"Why——" Jack began, intending to set the Indian right. Then he thought better of it. "Perhaps that 's why the General had his hair cut," he reasoned, — "to mislead the Injuns. Though I don't think that can be so. That 's not his style. And as for the Injuns, they 're afraid of the Chief Long Hair, and he wants to keep up that feeling. Evidently they don't recognize him. Well, they 'll have to find out for themselves. I 'm not going to give aid and comfort to the enemy."

Young Wolf did not notice his friend's broken sentence. He was thinking over the attack.

"The scouts look for Long Hair," continued

Young Wolf, " but someone else leads the Long-Swords. Sitting Bull hear from agency men that the Great Father have blood feud with Chief Long Hair, and stake him out by the big salt water. Did my brother hear that ? "

Jack laughed aloud.

" I don't think that 's the President's way, Young Wolf," he said. " The President did try to lay the General out, though, that 's a fact,' he went on.

" That what agency men said," the Indian commented.

" But that 's all fixed up now," continued Jack. " You 'll see the White Chief with Yellow Hair—right here—sooner than you think for," he declared, compromising with his conscience. " But I was n't with his command," he explained; " I was with Major Reno."

" That the other Long-Sword chief," said Young Wolf, nodding toward the scene of the stampede. " Not looking for him. He drive Dakotas off, if Rees had not stampeded. What soldiers here for, Big Tooth ? "

" Why, to make you all go on the reservations and mind the Injun agent," replied Jack. " Why don't you go ? Why are you kicking up such a rumpus—what are you fighting for, anyhow ? "

" For our homes, Big Tooth," replied Young Wolf, solemnly. " I say once to Big Tooth, the

earth—our mother—this land belong to Uncapapa. I say, then, Would you sell your mother? No. I say now, Would you fight for your mother? Yes. That why the Uncapapas and the Ogallalas strike back when Long Hair and his soldiers come to the land of the Dakotas."

"O, then, you are here to fight," said Jack.

"We here; we fight," Young Wolf retorted. "Not come just to fight. Some here to be glad over the hunting; some here to be glad because we whip the Crows—our enemies. Our medicine good; so we glad; we come to have dance—we and our brothers. Then, this day, when the sun was up our scouts say, 'Soldiers coming.' They say so to Sitting Bull, they say so to Chief Gall, they say so to Bear-Hawk, our cousin, the Blackfoot Sioux. Soon we see the Long-Swords cross the ford and come on us. We run from the lodges and tepees. No time for war-chief to make war-party. Gall call out *Mo-ka-he!* that mean 'Come along! every man for himself!' Bear-Hawk call out *Mo-ka-he!* We come; we jump on our ponies; we ride with our guns; we stampede the Rees. That all. Sioux not fighting—Long-Swords fighting—and we not run away. That all. Now Big Tooth see. Look out; look out! See who runs!"

Jack had been with Young Wolf in the tent, probably a half-hour or so; there had been some

little firing of guns, but now, as Young Wolf spoke, there came a confusion of yells and shots. Jack put his head to the tepee flap as Young Wolf bade him and saw a fearful sight—Major Reno and his command flying for the bluffs in one mad rush for life, while upon them and about them, dashed the victorious Indians, inflamed by blood and the thirst for vengeance.

The panic swept across the river and up the bluffs on the eastern bank; into the pony-trail; through the ravine where men and horses were horribly entangled. The Indian guns opened upon them with deadly effect; and when, at last, Major Reno and his frightened command reached the bluffs, two hundred feet above that death valley, three officers were left behind, dead; twenty-nine men were killed, seven were wounded, and sixteen missing—not counting Jack Huntingdon, who, with his head stuck out of Chief Gall's tepee, saw the whole dreadful rout and slaughter.

He ground his teeth in rage over the defeat; but at the same time he was thankful that he had not been in that frightful stampede, and that, instead, he had fallen into the hands of Young Wolf.

As for that young warrior, he could no longer withstand the fury of the fight that impelled him to join his victorious kinsmen.

" Big Tooth stay here," he said. " Keep inside

tepee. Young Wolf needed"; and then he was gone, putting his pony to the dead gallop and yelling with all the strength of a goodly pair of Indian lungs.

Jack could hardly blame Young Wolf for thus taking "French leave." He would have done so himself, he argued, had he been in the young warrior's place. But all the same he wished the Indian lad had stayed with him; for, in the present excited state of the great Sioux village, he felt that it was really unhealthy for a white boy to be found there.

There certainly was great excitement in that populous valley of the Little Big Horn. Horsemen were galloping hither and thither, rounding up the great pony herds or rushing to join the Strong Hearts and Gall's warriors in the attack upon Reno; tepees were coming down; *travois* or lodge-pole drags were being loaded; the whole village—it was almost a city, for fully twelve thousand Indians were in that tent-filled valley—was in that uncertain state that wavers between jubilation and flight.

That was precisely Jack's condition. He was jubilant over his own escape; anxious as to Reno's fate; hopeful as to Custer's coming; speculative as to the chances for his own flight to safety. And as, in this uncertain frame of mind, he wavered between hope and fear there in the enemy's stronghold, in Chief Gall's own tepee, the tent-flaps parted suddenly and an Indian face peered in.

It was a face that Jack knew all too well; the face he feared above all others. It was Sitting Bull, the Master of the Strong Hearts.

In the half-light of the tepee he did not at first recognize the boy. But, looking again, he made one dart at the white intruder in the enemy's camp and dragged him to the light.

"Ugh!" said the medicine-chief.

Then he lifted his voice in the call that Jack knew so well.

"Po-to-sha-sha!"

From somewhere near at hand—Jack thought from one of the neighboring tepees—the ever-ready squaw-man came shuffling out and stood beside the chief. Not a gleam of recognition or sympathy for the white captive came, at this time, into the renegade's eyes. He had evidently thrown over this New York boy as a sort of bad penny that turned up so often and when thus least expected, that it was folly longer to try to save him. At least, that is what his looks implied.

Sitting Bull broke into a flow of Indian talk, and, at the first pause, the squaw-man translated.

"Boy," said he, "the chief asks why you are here? Why are you in Chief Gall's tepee? Why are you not in the thieves' ranks stealing into the Injun's land? Why are you not with the coffee-coolers of Long-Swords yonder whom the Strong

Hearts have beaten until they are blue, and driven like whipped dogs to the hills?"

"Well, Red Top," said Jack—somehow the presence of Sitting Bull always put this boy on his mettle and led him to answer in defiant and fearless words such as he might not have used to a war-chief for whom he had more respect—"Well, Red Top, you can just tell the chief that I am here because my pony brought me. I did n't ride with the troopers nor charge against the Strong Hearts. I came—well—because I could n't help it."

The chief eyed the boy inquiringly.

"Is it," he said, "that Big Tooth the white boy comes now to be a Strong Heart and a warrior of the Sioux because he sees that To-tan-ka's medicine indeed is true; that the foot of the white man is to be withered as he treads the Indian land; that the Long-Swords are to be driven into death? It is well. My young brother is wise. Let him but await here in Chief Gall's own tepee the end of this battle and he shall, over the tortures of the white men who shall feel our fire and try our stakes, become a Dakota indeed, a Strong Heart true and faithful, fit to follow so great a leader as the Master of the Strong Hearts—I—To-tan-ka-i-yo-ta-ke. I have spoken."

"Have you?" said Jack, as Po-to-sha-sha concluded his interpretation. "Then listen to me, Red

Top. You can just tell that old fraud of a Sitting Bull that he does more sitting than anything else. Chief Gall told me that this To-tan-ka was a man with a big head and a little heart, and I guess that just about fits him. I don't believe he knows how to fight. I don't believe that, if General Custer should come charging down the hills now, that your big medicine-chief would—— "

He got no further. For even as Sitting Bull, listening to Jack's harangue, was on the point of breaking it off and demanding a translation in sections, a cry came up the valley from the west, and then the crash of splintering guns.

A runner came flying up the valley.

" More soldiers! " he cried. Thus Jack could interpret his vigorous gestures. " O, To-tan-ka, Chief Long Hair is thundering down the slope. We are attacked on both sides."

The medicine-chief darted one quick look at the west, from whence the new danger came; he cast one look upon this white boy, whom he really did not feel quite certain about. Then he spoke hurriedly to the squaw-man, turned on his heel and strode quickly away.

Po-to-sha-sha stood silent, looking after his chief with a puzzled expression.

" What does he say, Red Top ? What 's up ? " asked Jack, hastily.

The squaw-man turned on the boy a face wreathed with smiles—quite a different countenance from that with which he had confronted Jack at the talk with Sitting Bull.

"Well! if you don't have the consarnedest luck, sonny," he said. "Say, let 's feel in your pockets. Have n't you got that white weasel's tail I gave you?"

Jack ransacked his pockets, and, sure enough, in his blouse he found the charm that Po-to-sha-sha had forced upon him.

"That 's it; that 's the ticket!" cried the delighted squaw-man, "I never knew it to fail. It 's sure charm every time. Talk about Sitting Bull's medicine! Why, it ain't in it with my white weasel's tail. You hang on to that, sonny, and you 'll get out of this place alive yet, I do believe."

"Well, but what did Sitting Bull say?" queried Jack.

"What, just now?" returned Po-to-sha-sha, "why, he said, 'More soldiers. The Long-Sword Chief shall not work his way with us. My medicine shall not fail. I will go to the hills and make more. It is not for a great medicine-chief to mix in the crush of battle when he should be making medicine for the aid of his brothers. Keep the white boy here,' he said, 'until I return.'"

"But I 'll be blowed if I do keep you here,

sonny," continued Po-to-sha-sha, earnestly. "George! hear that. That 's a sure enough attack at the other end. And see! there 's Iron Cedar calling back Chief Gall. Look out, Big Tooth, get behind me. Jump into the tent; here 's all Gall's warriors and the Strong Hearts rushing back."

It was so indeed. The summons of Iron Cedar had reached Chief Gall where he was besieging Reno, and at once the bulk of his command turned and raced down the now re-aroused and excited valley, to meet the new attack. All was confusion in the plain. More tepees were taken down, the squaws and children made ready to fly, and in the uncertainty Jack was again an unnoticed quantity.

But Po-to-sha-sha had not forgotten him.

" Now 's your chance, sonny," he said. " You want to git, double-quick. Jump on your pony and follow me. Put your head down so 's they can't see who you are. Now come this way," and running beside Brutus, with his hand on the bridle-rein, the squaw-man guided Jack's course to escape.

He skirted the Little Big Horn almost to the mouth of what is now Reno's Creek; then through a break in the willows and cottonwoods where no Indians were moving, he led the pony to a shallow ford.

" There, sonny, you cut across here and follow the river for a half-mile or so till you come to a little

cooley just back of three big cottonwoods. There 's not many people notice that cooley, but it 's just what you want. You push up that, and you 'll be on the bluffs so 's you can get to the soldiers. The Injuns have n't got up there yet, but they will soon, and if the fellow that 's leading the soldiers don't look out, they 'll corner him."

"But, Red Top, now 's your chance; why not come with me?" Jack inquired, as he grasped the squaw-man's hand in acknowledgment and farewell. "See, here, if you 'll come along, it 'll be good for you. The Major's Ree scouts don't amount to a hill of beans. You know more about this place than all the Rees and Crows put together. Come on, and he 'll make you chief scout, and you can get back to be a white man once more, and be a big one, too. Come!"

The boy pulled away at the renegade's hand, The man looked wistfully at him. Then he freed himself, shaking his head meanwhile.

"You 're a good fellow, sonny, and I 'm obliged to you," said the renegade. Your offer 's mighty tempting, and I believe you 'd try to make it good. But it 's no use, boy; it 's no use. Why! see here!" the renegade's voice had a note alike of protest and of pathos; "down in that village is my tepee; in that lodge is my wife, Mi-mi, and my little baby girl. Mi-mi 's been a good wife to me,

if she is an Injun. Would I be a man to go away from her—to desert her now, when the village is in danger and the guns of the white soldiers speak death to squaw and child as well as warrior? No, Big Tooth; my place is here. I took Mi-mi for my wife for better or worse, just as true and faithful as if she was a white girl. She loves and trusts me. I 'll not break my word to her, not for fifty head scouts nor the biggest chance you can offer to be the biggest kind of a white man. Hark! there go those murdering guns again," he cried, as another rattling volley sounded in the west. "Go on, sonny; ford the stream, and ride like the wind to a safe place with your people. Never mind me; my place is at my tepee, to defend my home—and Mi-mi, my wife. So long, boy," and with a farewell wave of the hand the faithful squaw-man disappeared through the willows, and Jack Huntingdon splashed into the ford of the Little Big Horn to join his comrades under Major Reno, if he could do so safely.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHERE IS CUSTER?"

WITH swift but cautious riding, Jack skirted the river for a half-mile or so, until he came to the little cooley by the three cottonwoods to which Po-to-sha-sha had directed him. Climbing this incline, he came out upon the ridge, where the bluffs stretched away into broken hill-crests. Here he found traces of Reno's retreat and the signs of Indian fight.

But he saw no living thing. The new attack at the farther end of the valley had, as he knew, drawn the Indians away from Reno, and the troopers had fallen back to safe shelter.

Still he rode on, unseen and unmolested.

"I do believe there 's good luck in that white weasel's-tail of Po-to-sha-sha's, after all," he said to himself; and then he suddenly stopped.

He had wandered from the trail of the retreat where it had swerved a bit to the left, thinking to cut it off by cross riding, when all at once he saw why it had swerved. Brutus plumped his freefeet on the outer edge of a rounding swell, and, looking

over his pony's head, Jack saw that he had come to a sudden halt at the sharp rim of a second cooley which led down to the curving river below.

And, worse than this, as he looked down into the ravine he saw, stealing snake-like up the cooley a line of Indian warriors bent on a new surprise of Reno's men.

Jack gave one swift look back. To retreat would be capture or death, whichever route he took. For, if he rode back to the valley, he would ride into a trap; if he tried to skirt the edge of the cooley and ride around it the Indians would be up and upon him before he could double the turn.

Besides this, the Indians had seen him. That he knew. For that one swift glance into the depths of the ravine had caught the sight of an upturned face. It was that of the swift runner of the Uncapapas, from whom the spring of the Duke had saved Jack at the sun-dance tent—Wam-bli-wa-ku-wa, "Chasing Eagle." And, stealing behind this old-time enemy, whose eyes, as the white boy read them, gleamed with vindictiveness, Jack Huntingdon saw the face of his friend, Young Wolf, the Sioux.

Fear and hope chased each other through the boy's mind. Could Young Wolf aid him this time—now, when the young brave was actually on the war-path?

He was not long in doubt. For even in his instant of wavering, two cries came up from the cooley—

one the unmistakable whoop of Chasing Eagle, intent on his prey; the other the warning of Young Wolf.

"Big Tooth run," it said; "Young Wolf enemy now. Got bad heart; out for scalp."

And Jack knew that this time the blood-madness was on his friend, and there was little hope for him.

He thought swiftly. If he were captured he might, perhaps, find the former friendship of Young Wolf returning; but then, on the other hand, he might be shot down and killed before he was captured. It would not do to take a risk.

He measured the cooley with his eye. It was a narrow cut—little more than a gully. It could not be more than twenty feet from edge to edge—not wide for a gully but big for a jump. He had practiced Brutus at jumping—both the long and the high jump, and his friends of the Seventh had given him many points.

To be sure, the pony was tired and jaded from his days of marching; but it was life or death.

"I 've just got to do it," said Jack.

He could hear the Indians riding up the cooley to cut him off at the top; once more he measured the chasm with his eye; then, falling back "to get a good ready," he dug his feet into Brutus's ribs, shook the reins loose on the pony's neck, and gave him one sounding slap on the rump. Then, shouting "Hi-yi-yip!—hi yah!" Indian fashion, "Jump,

Brutus, jump!" Jack, as he expressed it, when telling the story, "just let everything go and trusted in Providence."

The intelligent, wiry, trained, and tough little pony, urged to his utmost, responded nobly. He dashed to the edge of the cooley, doubled himself for the leap, and, spurning the hither side after what Jack called "a mighty good purchase," launched himself across the chasm, and the next instant his forefeet struck the farther side,—struck and held, while, for one instant, his hind hoofs almost dangled over the edge.

A cry of astonishment and rage came from the Indians in the cooley. But the white boy waited for nothing. The instant the pony struck, Jack, leaning far forward to help, sprang to the ground and tugged at rein and head so desperately as actually to pull Brutus, aided by the pony's own intelligent exertions, over the brink and "out of the hole."

"Good! Brutus," he cried, delightedly, patting the panting pony's neck as he vaulted into the saddle. Then he wheeled about and shouted down into the cooley, "Bye-by, boys! I 'll see you later."

A shot and a chorus of yells came up from the gully as the Indian's protest; then, setting Brutus into a dead gallop, he rode along the bluff to where, not half a mile away, he saw with joy and thankfulness the moving forms of the troopers of the Seventh.

But, as he sped away, Jack was certain that he heard, mingled with the cries of disappointment and disgust at his escape, the voice of Young Wolf calling out, "Heap good! Big Tooth. Little Man; Little Man—We-cha-sa Chis-chi-na!" And Jack Huntingdon felt that he had not lost the friendship of his Sioux brother, but, on the other hand, had fairly earned from Young Wolf the new name he had promised him, when he deserved it—We-cha-sa Chis-chi-na, "Little Man."

At a dead gallop he rode into the lines.

"Injuns! Injuns! just behind!" he shouted. "Coming up the cooley. Watch out for 'em!" And then boy and pony dropped together, both of them over-wrought, done up by the tension of that narrow escape.

Both were on their feet again speedily, rubbed down, refreshed, and pelted with pats and questions. But there was little time for explanation. Jack found he had come up with Captain French's troop of Reno's battalion, posted on the high bluff and leading the advance in the endeavor to move down to Custer's support. But even before Jack could reply to the captain's query, "Where 's Custer? have you seen him, Jack?" with a yell the Indians were upon them, swarming up the cooley and galloping along the bluff.

"Ping-ping! swish-thud!" came the bullets from

the Indian fire, singing overhead, or striking the ground in unpleasant proximity. Captain French's troop was turned and driven in; and Jack, it must be confessed, was well in the lead. But what would you have of a boy who had, just then, neither rifle nor pistol, and did have a most pressing desire to save his own curly scalp?

He saved it; for as French's troop and Weir's troop, both driven in by the Indian onrush, came tearing over the bluff, Captain Godfrey's men, dismounting, deployed rapidly, and poured in such a hot fire that the Indian advance was checked. Then in good order, retreating, halting, firing, the Indian onset was held off until the three troops had completed the retreat and joined the main command —and Jack!

It was now seven o'clock in the evening of that fatal twenty-fifth of June, and seven companies of the gallant Seventh Cavalry were entirely surrounded—besieged by fully two thousand warriors. Where were the other five ?

It was an often-repeated question in that beleaguered camp. Jack, when interrogated, could only answer, " I do not know. There was firing down the valley, and the bucks who were fighting you folks here went galloping down that way to join in the scrimmage. That 's when I got away. Don't you suppose the General has cleaned 'em all out by

this time, or driven 'em this way? Of course he has. Nothing could happen to Custer."

"Perhaps not, Jack," Captain McDougall said; "but the firing stopped down there long ago. Why, when I came up with the pack-train, it was after four, and then it had stopped. I 'm afraid, Jack, that the General made a big mistake by not taking the whole regiment in at once in the first attack."

"I wish he had," Jack declared. "I 'd have been in the fight then with him and with Autie Reed, instead of loafing here on these bluffs. Wonder what we 're staying here for, anyhow?"

"It 's a case of needs must, I reckon, Jack," replied the captain. "There 's Injuns to right of us, Injuns to left of us, Injuns in front of us—somebody 's blundered,"—and Jack wondered what made the captain's words sound so familiar. "I tell you what, Jack; Custer has either got into trouble, or he 's fighting his way down to join Crook. Anyhow, our command ought to be doing something, or Custer 'll be after Reno with a sharp stick."

"But what can we do, Captain?" inquired Lieutenant Mathey of the pack-train.

The question seemed pertinent. Partially shielded by the rugged bluffs above the river by a short ridge on the north and a hill on the south, the whole command was practically fenced in, and, as Jack

declared, "the Injuns were all peeking over the fence."

"Not all, Jack," said the captain. "Look down in the valley. What does that mean?"

It had grown quite dark by this time, and the beleaguered troopers could move about with more safety. Jack stepped to the crest of the ridge and looked down into the valley. From end to end it gleamed with the light of bonfires, and resounded with the noise of jubilation. The rattle of drums and guns, the chorus of yells and screams, and all the accompaniments of savage revel rose through the mists and shadows of the Greasy Grass, and the captain assured Jack solemnly that all that noise meant a celebration of some kind. "I 'm afraid something has happened to somebody, and that the Injuns have got some prisoners. Who have they been at, I wonder? And where under the sun is Custer?"

"I 'm going to head an exploring expedition," the lieutenant declared. "Who 'll go?"

"Oh, let me go with you; can't I, Lieutenant?" cried Jack.

"You sit still, boys," the captain commanded. "Lieutenant Varnum wanted to do that very thing half an hour ago, but the major would n't let him. It 's too risky. Why, even the scouts could n't find any sign of Custer. The major sent them out just after dark, and all they had to report was that

the country was full of Sioux. As if we did n't know that without having to send out scouts to tell us," grumbled the captain.

There was more or less grumbling among the besieged during that awful night. Both officers and men were inclined to find fault with things and to magnify trifles. The trees in the ridge, swaying with the night wind, looked like moving columns of troops, while the manifold noises of the night were tortured by over-strained nerves and ears into the voice of command, the call of the trumpets, the tramp and rattle of horses.

" Relief 's coming," the cry went up as one after another saw the moving forms and heard the advancing sounds.

" It 's Crook!" " It 's Custer!" " Cheer up, boys, they 'll get us out now," the call of encouragement passed, while trumpets were sounded and shots fired to guide the approaching column.

And after all it was only waving trees and night sounds, while all around in the shadows, for all that the besieged knew, lurked hundreds or thousands of savages, waiting for the dawn. It was terrible. Even Jack suffered a large shrinkage in his pluck, and felt his heart yearning toward home. A night of such uncertainty is the worst of experiences.

Midnight came; few could sleep. At last the order went round to dig rifle-pits for better protection.

Work was a relief. In pairs, or by threes and fours, the men labored in the hard, dry ground, using hatchets, axes, spades, and shovels, knives, forks, tin cups, and canteens to throw up the necessary entrenchments. By dawn, which came at three o'clock, most of the command was fairly entrenched behind the uncertain rifle-pits, and then the battle began.

The Indians had been heavily reinforced during the night, and their guns opened on the beleaguered troopers as soon as the light came creeping over those Montana hills.

Now fast and furious, now light and scattered, and again with redoubled force the fusillade continued until it was broad day, and Captain Benteen could stand the suspense no longer.

Major Reno still showed no disposition to take the offensive. He could not be induced to risk a charge in the open. It was his first real experience as an Indian-fighter in actual command.

"Then let me do it, sir," said Captain Benteen. "If something is n't done mighty soon the Injuns will run into our lines. They 're up to something of that sort now, I know."

Still Reno hesitated.

"There are more than you bargain for out there, Benteen," he said.

"Well, what if there are?" cried Benteen, im-

patiently, chafing under the indisposition of his superior officer. "We 've got to do something, I tell you, and that pretty quick. This won't do, Major; it won't, really. You must drive them back, or they 'll drive us."

"All right, Benteen; you can try it on," said the reluctant major. "You give the word."

The captain whirled about to the men.

"Boots and saddles!" he cried, and the men tumbled into their saddles while the trumpeter played the charge.

"All ready, men?" cried the captain, while Jack, beside the pack-train, hopped from one foot to the other in the excitement of the unarmed civilian. "Now 's your time. Now! give 'em Hail Columby! Hip, hip, here we go!" And away went every trooper with a chorus of hurrahs, so loud and vigorous as to startle and disconcert the throng of Indians at the foot of one of the hills, where they were gathering for a charge.

Bang! bang! went the carbines of the Seventh, loaded while yet the men were in the rifle-pits; neck and neck went the troopers, charging straight against the Indian line. It broke, scattered, and poured down the slope; but before the captain and his command had followed a hundred yards, Reno sounded the recall.

"Get back, men! get back!" he cried, and much

against their will the command turned and trotted back to the pits to cower, to suffer, and to fight; for, upon their return, the Indians came swarming back and re-commenced their fusillades. But they did not again gather to charge the rifle-pits.

The main suffering was from thirst. Water was in sight, but not to be obtained, for the approach to the river was commanded by the besiegers.

Oh, how thirsty Jack Huntingdon was! How thirsty were all those poor fellows in the rifle-pits! Pebbles, grass roots, dry crumbs of bread, potatoes —no such substitutes could bring the relief that the blessed water could afford, though all were tried.

"We must have water, Captain," came the cry.

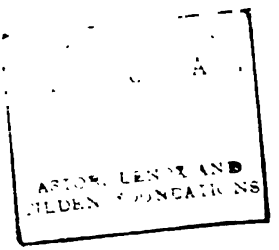
"Well, how 'll you get it?" asked the captain. "Who 'll go? Who 'll volunteer?"

"I 'll go!" "So will I!" "I!" "Me too!" "I!"—came the instant reply, and Jack Huntingdon's voice was as loud as any.

Camp-kettles were distributed. Under the cover of Benteen's guns the water-party worked their way toward the river as far as possible. Then came the risk.

"Now! ready! go!" came the command, and with a mad rush the "kettle corps" dashed into the water, filled the kettles, and rushed back to the cover of the guns, while from copse and bluff the watchful Indians sought to pick the brave fellows off.

THE RETURN OF THE "KETTLE CORPS." *Page 254.*


ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

Several of the "kettle corps" were wounded, but none were killed. Three times was the dash for water made, and each time Jack was one of the "rush-line," and returned with a full kettle and without a scratch.

"All the effect of my white weasel's tail," he declared, laughingly, when the men patted him on the back and cried, "Good boy, Jack!"

So the day dragged on and another night came, and still the Seventh was besieged in its rifle-pits by the Indian host. And still would the query go up again and again, "Where is Custer? If the General were here, he 'd get us through."

So came at last Thursday morning, the twenty-seventh of June. With the daylight came reveille and breakfast. The men were tired and desperate. But where were the Indians?

Not one was to be seen.

"Can't we reconnoitre?" queried Captain McDougall.

"No, no; not yet," Major Reno replied. "Stay where you are. They 've got some trap planned for us. Be ready for the pits as soon as you see them."

Still all was silent. Down in the valley a few ponies were grazing, but no other signs of life could be seen.

Nine o'clock. Half-past nine. Then far down

the valley, in the bottom-land along the river, a cloud of rising dust was seen.

"Look out, boys; they 're coming for us!" rose the cry.

The men were ready for rifle-pit or charge, whichever might be ordered. Anything was better than suspense. The dust-cloud came nearer. The "kettle corps" refilled the supply; the horses were corralled in a protected position. Everything was ready for an attack.

"How slow they come!" said Jack. "I wonder what they 're up to?"

Moving forms were descried in the film; now they could be seen distinctly.

"Soldiers!" rose the cry. "Hurrah! it 's our boys! Custer! Custer!"

Hands were shaken in joy; hats flung aloft. It is even reported that Jack danced a fandango with the lieutenant of the pack-train. Who would n't, with relief in sight, after two days of siege and torment?

"Is it the gray-horse troop? Is it Custer?" was asked of those with glasses or brighter eyes.

"No, it 's not a gray troop. But they 're our folks," came the slow reply, half disappointment, half relief.

Thus they rode nearer—up the cooley, along the bluff. But even as the besieged watched the

approach, from quite another direction came a galloping rider.

"Is this the Seventh Cavalry? Is General Custer here?" he asked. "I have an order from General Terry."

The note was passed on to Major Reno.

"Where are you from? Did n't you see Custer down the river? What do you know?" the anxious cavalrymen asked.

"No. I 'm from General Terry," replied the courier. "Two Crow scouts came in yesterday, and said the Seventh had been whipped, nearly killed, and needed relief and medicine. Is n't it so?"

"Well, we 're alive, you see," said the captain. Then, from the trail along the bluff, the relief came up.

"Hullo! it 's Bradley," cried one officer. "Hullo! Bradley," as the lieutenant of the Seventh Infantry dashed out from the advance. "Where 's Custer?"

"Dead, I 'm afraid," came the startling reply. "We did n't see him; but I don't believe any escaped. We counted nearly two hundred dead bodies."

"Dead!" cried Jack, and his voice sounded strange and unnatural. "What! the General dead —and Autie Reed—and all! It can't be possible."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE REVENGE OF RAIN-IN-THE-FACE.

BUT it was possible. Alas! the pity of it! It was all too true. For when, in a few moments, the whole relief column rode up, with General Terry and his staff in command, the hearty welcoming cheer of the relieved troopers gained but a brief recognition and return.

Jack could read, as could the others, on the grave, set face of the General the awful truth. And when Major Reno and his officers came up to meet their deliverers, the clasped hands, the quivering lips, the sadly shaken heads, the brief word of thanks and sorrow set the seal of truth on the unbelievable story that Custer and two hundred of his troopers lay dead on the fatal heights above the Little Big Horn.

"But how did it happen? How could it happen?" asked Jack; and so queried many of the brave troopers who had been accustomed to look upon Custer as invincible—the gallant leader of the fighting Seventh.

No one could tell. They could only reply that,

so far as they knew, not one had escaped the massacre; not one had lived to tell the story.

And Jack repeated over and over, "Poor Autie Reed! What if I had had my way, and gone with him?" It had indeed been the narrowest escape from death that Jack Huntingdon had known in that short but eventful Indian campaign of 1876.

On the next day—the morning of June twenty-eighth—Jack rode out from the fatal rifle-pits where Reno and his command had stood their terrible siege, and which had cost him the lives of fifty brave men, and rode along the bluffs and down into the valley to view the spot where Custer rode his last rally and made his last stand.

With scouts thrown out ahead to look for lurking Indians, the survivors of the Seventh followed the trail along the bluffs, for they were detailed to perform the last sad offices for their dead comrades—to put them out of sight. Jack, depressed but excited, sad-faced but inquisitive, rode for some distance by the side of the trumpeter of Company H—the last living man who saw Custer alive.

"Tell me about it," he demanded; and the trumpeter, friendly to the boy and feeling the importance of his own peculiar connection with the affair, told Jack, so far as he had been a part of it, the story of Custer's gallant ride to death.

"You see, Jack," he said, "I was detailed to go with the General as trumpeter, though I belonged to Captain Benteen's battalion. But I was glad to go, of course. There was sure to be something lively going on if you rode with the General."

"That 's so," Jack assented. "I know I wanted to go along with him badly enough."

"Mighty lucky for you, you did n't, young fellow," remarked the trumpeter. "Well, when we broke from the major, he went to the left, and the General took the right. That left the river between us, so he could n't see you when the major got into trouble, and you could n't see him when we were winding this very trail along the bluff."

Jack studied the situation from that point. It was a fact. The high bluffy ridge and the river lay between the two trails, and the marching columns must have been concealed from each other.

"The General, he first got a glimpse of the village up here on the bluffs," said the trumpeter, "—perhaps you heard him halloo—but it was n't anything like what we saw from that ridge yonder. Anyhow, when we got here—there, you stand right here and look down—can't you see the valley?"

Jack reined his pony in as the trumpeter spoke. His point of view overlooked the valley, lying broad and fair in the morning sun, with the winding river cleaving its tortuous way between its fringed

banks of willows and cottonwoods. The valley was silent and tenantless now, and half obscured by the spasmodic clouds of shifting smoke, the smouldering remains of the Indian's last blind, when they had set the grass on fire to cover up their retreat.

"You don't see much down there now, do you, Jack? Not much that looks like Injuns, I mean. But I tell you, boy, it was a sight that morning when I stood right here near the General and looked down on it. There were lodges and wicky-ups everywhere; and ponies!—well, just herds of ponies,—where there were n't lodges. I tell you, it looked like a big contract to collar that encampment. But the General, he thought it was luck. He just took it for the softest snap he 'd had since he and Sheridan drove Rosser and Early up the valley."

"I know about that," said Jack. "My father was with Custer then."

"Is that so!" exclaimed the trumpeter. "Well, he saw a great old fight. I was there too. But this valley 's altogether different from that one, hey? Well, the General he stood here, just as you do, and he looked over just like you 're doing. Then he chucked off his sombrero and waved it round his head, and he sings out to the battalion: 'Horray!' says he. 'Courage, boys; keep up your courage! We 've got 'em,' says he; 'looks as

though they were asleep. We 'll light right in on 'em, and as soon as we 're through, we 'll get back to our station.' "

"Was n't that just like the General?" cried Jack, enthusiastically. "Did n't make any difference how big the odds were, he was going to win."

"That 's so," the trumpeter replied; "that 's the General every time. But I reckon, though, that he saw pretty soon how big a contract it was going to be, for when we struck this next ridge he took another look."

Again they halted at a higher spot on the bluff, with a wider outlook and a broader view of the valley and the hill-slope at its northern end.

At one part of this broken land, where the slope fell off to the valley and the river, Jack noticed a large number of white-looking objects scattered about the field.

"What are those things?" queried Jack—"sheep?"

The trumpeter shaded his eyes. "How you going to get sheep here?" he said. "The Injuns don't keep sheep. No; I reckon they 're just a lot of white boulders scattered around. It 's a rocky spot."

But the officers of the advance had already noticed the strange objects, and field-glasses were at more than one pair of eyes.

"Boulders, man?" cried one of them, turning from his glass to the trumpeter. "Can't you see what they are? It 's all that 's left of Custer and his men. See, boy," and he handed his glass to Jack.

Jack Huntingdon gave just one glance and then turned away.

"Oh, how white they look!" he said.

But the trumpeter had seen too many "stricken fields."

"What did you expect, Jack—full-dress?" he said, brusquely. "Don't you know what Injuns are? Those poor fellows have been lying out there, stripped, for nigh on to forty-eight hours. Of course they 'd look white."

"So that 's where they caught the General, is it?" mused the trumpeter, looking again toward the hill of death. "I wonder if he had any thought of it as he stood here. Anyhow, here 's where he caught the idea that he 'd got about the whole Sioux nation and their friends to tackle. For just as he rode away, he turned to Lieutenant Cook—he was the adjutant, you know, Jack—and he says to him, 'We 'll want more ammunition to tackle all that,' says he. 'Just write a line to Benteen, won't you, Cook? Tell him we 've struck a big village, and to hurry up himself and bring on the packs. Let the trumpeter carry it.'"

"That was you, eh?" said Jack.

"That was me, yes," the trumpeter replied. "Then the adjutant pulls out his pad of paper, and he scribbled off an order to Benteen. 'Be sure to tell him to bring packs,' the General says, while the adjutant was writing. So Lieutenant Cook he added a P. S., and then he read it off: 'Benteen, come on. Big village. Be quick. Bring packs. P. S.—Bring packs.'"

"That 's the very order you brought to Captain Benteen, is n't it?" queried Jack, who had himself seen that now historic order.

"The very identical one," the trumpeter replied. "The General he laughed when the adjutant read it off. 'That 's it, Cook,' says he; 'short and sweet, but right to the point. Now, then, trumpeter,' he says to me, 'go! ride for all you 're worth to Captain Benteen.' I saluted and wheeled around. 'Now, boys! Down the cooley! Charge!' cried the General, and he and his men just laid their horses to it and rode down that cooley just ahead. I turned for one last look as I started, thinking the General might want to add a word. He just motioned me with his hand to hurry and went down the cooley at a gallop. Then I turned on the trail and rode back till I came up to Captain Benteen on the creek we crossed away back, and gave him the order. That 's the last I saw of the General, Jack.

And there he is now, just lying scattered 'round loose, and dead! My, my! but it 's just awful!"

It was but a lame expression of his sympathy and deep regret. But it was deep and heartfelt. Then, as if he had no words left to voice his sorrow, the trumpeter pressed ahead of Jack and rode alone and silent down the cooley.

With pitying eyes, but stern faced and filled with a burning desire for vengeance, the troopers of the Seventh came out upon that field of silent comrades that told all too plainly how Custer and his two hundred men gave up their lives.

They lay where they had fallen. In ranks and almost in files, overpowered by the weight of numbers, their horses discarded, fighting on foot and against odds so desperate that some had scarcely time to raise a hand in combat or defence,—there they fell and there they died—martyrs of miscalculation, victims of a terrible mistake.

Marred and marked by all the abandon of Indian savagery, they were yet, many of them, recognizable; and their comrades of the Seventh, moving sadly amid the slain, with the shadow of the tragedy on their faces, and on their lips only the short, stern words of horror and the consecration to revenge, could distinguish officers and men, and be proud of the pluck and heroism that upheld so many of their comrades, even to the death.

Here lay Calhoun and Crittenden, in position, at the rear of the dead, irregular line, where, thrown across to hold the Sioux assault in check, the whole company had died shoulder to shoulder. Here, less than a mile beyond, as if to mark another stand to check, lay Keogh and his thirty-eight men, dead on the slope of the ridge, slaughtered in position, "game" to the last; down toward the river, Yates and Van Reilly died; over the ridge fell Smith; and, on the knoll or hillock that marks the highest point, surrounded by his brothers and friends, and, in the midst of his little knot of troopers—the General! Unmarred, untouched, save by the one fatal bulletmark, there lay the heroic, impetuous, devoted, but overpowered Custer. Untouched, unscalped; for, even in death, the Sioux dared not touch the feared and gallant Chief Long Hair.

But when, to the right of the General, just over the slope, Jack Huntingdon came upon the body of young Autie Reed, his comrade and friend, the bright, enthusiastic, earnest, manly boy, all the pent-up feeling of the lad gave way in one hot burst of tears, and he stumbled away, glad to put the whole awful tragedy out of sight, if never out of mind.

Yet, even as he left, one other thought came to him—the recollection of a vow that a year before he had heard in the Indian lodges. He turned to the trumpeter.

"Captain Tom—Captain Tom Custer, did you look at him?" he asked. "Was he—was he—all whole?"

The trumpeter strode up the hill to where, near to his brother, the General, the fiery little captain lay, still, in death. Then he came tearing back.

"Say, Jack!" he cried, "those bloody Injuns have just cut out the captain's heart."

Jack Huntingdon threw up his hands in horror.

"Rain-in-the-Face! He did it," said the boy. "He kept his word. He has taken his revenge."

And then, unwilling to help in the sad task that fell to the burying party, unable, indeed, to share in it, Jack Huntingdon walked slowly away to where, quite out of sight and hearing of the sorry scene, the clear and shallow Little Big Horn rippled musically over its shining pebbles.

He could not comprehend it all. Boy-like, the thought of death rarely came to him; it was a thing he neither cared to face nor to contemptate. Get him into a scrape or in peril of his life even, and Jack Huntingdon could take his chance with the best; he could front danger, even death, manfully. But when once the peril was past, he seldom thought of the fatal part; his recollection was only of the danger he had faced, and the adventure in which he had borne his part.

And yet the thought of young Autie Reed,

lying beside his uncle, dead at his post, would bring back the reflection again and again, "Oh, what an escape! Suppose I had n't stayed behind with the pack-train, but had gone on with Autie and the General, as I wished—where would I be now? Poor Autie! he wanted to be in a big fight and see it all. Well, he had his wish. And now it 's all over with him. Poor chap!"

A stir in the bushes behind him gave him a start. The sight he had just witnessed had almost unnerved him. He found himself jumping at the least thing. Some animal was in the bushes—a coyote, perhaps; perhaps a pony. Or, perhaps, some poor fellow had escaped from the slaughter and lay there in hiding—famished, it might be—wounded, or worse.

To think, with Jack Huntingdon, was to act. His rifle was strapped to Brutus's saddle, and the pony was tethered with the horses on the hill. There might be danger, but, Jack-like, his curiosity overcame his caution, and parting the underbrush he pushed slowly in to investigate.

He found more than he bargained for. A little wicky-up of bent saplings and willows had been made near to a big cottonwood, and from it, staring out at him, he saw a face he knew.

The long red hair fell in dishevelled masses about the pale face; the mouth was opened in astonishment; the eyes stood wide in recognition and wonder.

Jack darted forward and caught at the tousled head, which dropped, burning with fever and weak from exhaustion, on the boy's strong arm. Reaction had followed surprise; the man was hurt to death and weak with wounds and loss of blood.

But again the eyes opened, and the lips spoke his name:

"Big Tooth! Is it you? What you doing here, sonny? I thought you must be dead, too." I thought everybody was dead.

Jack laid the sick man down and ran to the river. There he filled the hollow of his hat with water, and brought it dripping to the wicky-up.

"Here, Red Top, let me moisten your lips," he said. "It will do you good. But what under the sun are you doing here?"

For it was the squaw-man—Red Top, as they called him—Po-to-sha-sha, the renegade.

CHAPTER XX.

PO-TO-SHA-SHA TELLS HIS STORY.

"WELL, I just had to stay, you see, sonny," answered Red Top, replying to Jack's query.

"Why — did they hit you? Are you badly hurt?" asked Jack.

"Looks like I 'd got to go hunting the white buffalo," Po-to-sha-sha replied, his voice low and unsteady with lessening strength and loss of blood. "Reckon I 've got to go trailing down Long Hair and his boys—only he did n't have his long hair on, did he?"

"Oh, did you see him in the fight, Red Top?" cried Jack, forgetting for the moment the squaw-man's weakness.

"Did I? Did n't I, though?" the renegade replied. "Say, sonny, just you ease me up a bit, will you, and I can talk it off better. I 've got a long journey to go, boy, and I 've got a heap to tell you, 'cause I want to get shet of it all. Got anything particular to do?"

Jack knew that the sad offices of the troopers of

the Seventh which they must do toward their dead comrades would take a long time. His duty, surely, so he reasoned, was toward the living.

"Nothing but to help you, Red Top, if I can," he answered. "But say, let me get you over to camp, where you can be comfortable. We can make a litter for you and swing it between a couple of mules, so that you can ride easy. And I 'll have the doctor see you right off, and fix you up O. K. Here, let me put you down comfortably till I can get help to come here to you."

But the squaw-man laid a feeble, detaining hand on the boy's arm.

"No, no, sonny; don't do that," he said. "You 're a good fellow—a heap better than I deserve—but I don't want one of those sawbones prodding away at me. He can't do me any good. I know what I 've got, and what it 's going to do to me, and I want to keep my strength to talk to you. Seems like you 're one of my folks, sonny. Leastways, you 're all I 've got left, just now."

"Why, has Mi-mi gone and left you?" queried Jack, not liking to think of the squaw's desertion of her faithful, loving husband.

The squaw-man pointed feebly through the opening of the wicky-up.

"See that mound over yonder?" he said. "That 's Mi-mi."

"What! killed?" cried Jack. "O Po-to-sha-sha! how?"

"That 's why I 'm this way," the squaw-man replied. "You would n't have me shirk my duty to Mi-mi, would you?" he demanded, almost fiercely. "She was my wife. And she was good to you, Big Tooth. Don't you remember the corn-dumplings?"

"Yes, yes, I remember them," said Jack, soothingly. "Mi-mi was mighty good to me; that 's so, Red Top. I 'm not saying anything against her. I only asked how that happened."

He pointed toward the mound beneath the cottonwood.

"That?" Po-to-sha-sha answered his motion with another. "Why, I was just trying to keep her from it, that 's all, and—it happened."

"But how did it happen, and how were you hurt?" persisted Jack. Evidently Po-to-sha-sha had no desire to talk about his own deeds or losses. But the boy's desires won him.

"Well, you see, it was this way, sonny," he began, when Jack had propped him up with an army-blanket and his blouse for what he called a sort of a pillow, bathed his face, moistened his lips, and smoothed the tangled hair from his face. "When Custer came thundering down the cooley over yonder by the river, heading for the ford—See

here, Big Tooth!" he broke off, suddenly, looking earnestly into the boy's face; "you just promise me one thing now, right here, or I won't tell you a mite. Don't you say a word about this to any living soul—never!"

The sick man's tired eyes rounded themselves into solemn and earnest command, quite in keeping with the intenseness of his voice.

Jack hesitated.

"Why—why not, Red Top?" he queried. "What are you afraid of?"

"That 's just it—what am I?" repeated the squaw-man. "I 'll tell you what I 'm 'fraid of, boy. Sitting Bull and his bad medicine—that 's what."

Jack almost laughed. Even the gravity and sombreness of the situation in which he found himself could not restrain the protesting smile.

"Why, Red Top! you don't mean to say you believe in that?" he said. "That 's just superstition."

"Perhaps! perhaps! So you say," responded the squaw-man, shaking his head solemnly. "But you ain't lived with the Bull as I have all these years; you don't know how he can read your thoughts and set things to working against you so 's to make you sick or sore—and keep you so—just as he 's doing me now. That man 's everywhere, boy, and what

he can't do ain't worth doing. If I tell you what happened here and you let it out before he 's ready to have it known,—why, the Bull he 'll keep me from hunting the white buffalo, and 'll keep me lugging tepees like a squaw and making pack *travois*-loads and lodge-poles for the real buffalo-chasers. I want to be a man when I get up there,—for Mimi's sake!"

Jack could not pooh-pooh this desire. Boy-like, he felt it to be all foolishness, but nevertheless his depths of sentiment, which all boys do have, were probed by the pathetic plea of this white man who wished to retain the respect of the Indian wife he loved, when both should be carried to the Indian's paradise — the broad, free ranges where all true men should forever hunt the white buffalo. "Besides," argued Jack, "this thing will come out without my telling it. Some one must have escaped; the world need not depend on me for the story." So he promised. And Jack Huntingdon, as you know, could be relied on to keep his word.

Po-to-sha-sha knew this too, and he gave a sigh of relief as the boy solemnly assured him that he would keep his story to himself.

"I knew you would n't get me into a scrape, sonny," he said. "And yet I wanted to tell you what I saw, for the thing 's worth telling,—I vum! but it is," the squaw-man declared with a return of

his old-time earnestness. "You know when I left you at the ford, and you scooted back to your lines after the Bull had skedaddled, and Iron Cedar turned Chief Gall back to corner the new outfit down at this end of the valley?"

Jack nodded.

"Well, he did corner it with a vengeance," said the squaw-man. "I kited back with 'em after I left you, and caught up with 'em at the Ogallala's tepees by the creek on the other side. I thought sure you fellows would be on my heels, for when Gall and the Strong Hearts went swarming off, they only left some of the boys and old men to yell and make you think there was a crowd of 'em yet after you. If whoever led your soldiers had only had gumption enough to get down off 'n that hill and charge down to Long Hair's—Custer's—help, you 'd 'a' had things your own way, and there would n't have been that heap of dead soldiers out yonder —*and* Long Hair."

"I knew it, I just knew it," declared Jack, through set teeth. "Oh, why did n't the major have sand enough to try?"

"'Course I did n't want him to," the squaw-man hastened to say. "I 'm an Injun, and I wanted the Injuns to beat. But that 's a fact I 'm giving you. Well, when we got down here, Gall and Crazy Horse bunched their men together, and we

just galloped lickety-split up to the bluffs where Long Hair and his men were coming down through the cooley. They put up a great show, I tell you, boy. I was so sorry for them—for I saw they did n't stand a chance against our crowd—that I 'd have cleared out if I could. But our warriors were jammed so thick that I just had to ride on.

" When we saw them coming we divided. Gall and his folks went up toward the ford where I put you across, and Crazy Horse and his braves swarmed up the nor'west cooleys. That surrounded 'em, you see, and then — well, sir "—the squaw-man threw out his feeble hand in a significant gesture— " it was all up with 'em, then. We just got around 'em and jammed into 'em so, they did n't hardly have time to fight. Their horses was well-nigh dead beat, and so was the men with their hard riding; and when you 've got about ten to one, and that one all played out to begin with, it don't take long to finish up.

" It did n't with our folks. You know how Injuns fight — galloping their ponies around and around in a circle, firing and yelling for all they 're worth. That 's just the way they did here. They bunched your fellows into two or three clumps, and then they went circling around 'em like mad, firing as fast as they could load. The soldiers had got off their horses to fight—they always do, you know—

and our folks who were n't fighting or firing the soldiers, just popped off the fellows that were holding the horses—— "

" Every fourth trooper, that was," said Jack. " That 's the way we fight."

" Well, every fourth one of you went down like a buffalo cow when the hunters get at her—just with no fight at all; then our folks waved their blankets and stampeded the horses. That cut off all show of escape, you see, and when our folks had ringed around with a gallop three or four times—there was n't one of your folks left to fight. The Injuns had killed 'em all."

" But what about the Injuns ? " queried Jack; " did n't the troopers drop any of them ? "

" Did n't they ? Well, I reckon they did," the squaw-man replied. " Your folks fired as long as they could. Long Hair, he stood off on that little hill where you found him, and a dozen brave fellows beside him, and they just pegged away until we stopped 'em. You did n't see any traces of dead Injuns, I suppose ? "

" We never do, you know," Jack replied. " They always manage to get dragged off somehow."

" That 's so," the squaw-man assented. " Well, I got hurt before that was done, you see; but I can tell you this—there were as many as a hundred Injuns lying dead out there in front of Long Hair—

only he did n't have any long hair, did he ? What did he cut it off for ? 'Fraid of his scalp ? "

" Afraid, Red Top ! " cried Jack. " Why, my General did n't know what it was to be afraid."

" Well, he had a good chance to try it on right here," the squaw-man said. " But I 'm blamed if he found out. He was n't phased a bit up to the time I saw him drop."

" Who shot him, Red Top, do you know ? Was it Rain-in-the-Face ? " queried Jack.

" That tan-faced boaster ! " cried Po-to-sha-sha. " Well, I reckon not. He did more jumping and yelling and less real fighting than any man in the outfit, Rain did. But say !—he kept his vow. He took the heart out of Little Hair—that 's Custer's brother, you know—and eat it, too."

" I said so ! I said so ! " exclaimed Jack. " Poor Cap'n Tom."

" You need n't ' poor ' him, sonny," said Po-to-sha-sha. " Little Hair died game. He give Rain-in-the-Face mighty near as good as he sent, and if that pesky critter don't go 'round with a limp in his leg for the rest of his good-for-nothin' life, then you can count me no medicine."

" Well, where did you get hit, Red Top ? " asked Jack. " In Custer's last rally, yonder ? "

" No, I did n't, sonny," the squaw-man replied. " You see, when it came to real fighting, I just

counted out. I 'll fight Ree or Crow or Snake any day—though I tell you I don't hanker after it. But I can if I have to. But when it comes to shooting down boys in blue or firing against the flag—well, I think a heap too much of the uniform I wore to slam a shot into it."

"Then you were—you were a soldier, Red Top?" Jack exclaimed.

He had forced a bit of Po-to-sha-sha's story from him in spite of himself. The squaw-man's eyes blazed up.

"What did I say—what did I say, boy?" he cried. "Did I say the uniform I wore? Well—I did. And I disgraced it, boy, and that 's why—I 'm—here—dying like a dog, without country, home, or even a friend."

"Don't say that, Red Top," Jack cried, sympathetically. "I 'm here. And I won't leave you."

"You won't have to stay long, sonny," said the squaw-man. "That last jump of mine set me to bleeding again. Well, I 'm glad I did n't get it fighting against the flag."

"But how did you disgrace the uniform, Red Top?" Jack asked the renegade.

"I deserted, sonny; I just run away, 'cause the gold fever caught me, and 'cause folks at home called me shiftless, and the boys in my company hectored me into cussin' them and the service and

the flag and everything else." The squaw-man spoke rapidly and with evident shame. " So I cut and run. I said I 'd be rich and shame 'em all. But I never found the gold, sonny. I drifted out this way; got among the Injuns—first the Crows and then the Uncapapas. I did Sitting Bull a good turn, and then, I vum, when he 'd wormed my story out of me, in that 'tarnal way of his, what does he do but hold it over me, and swear that he 'd sell me to the government as a deserter if I did n't do as he said. And there you have it all, sonny. What could I do but give in to him? I 'd married Mi-mi —Injun fashion, of course, but she 's my wife all the same—and I had just to hang on. A deserter is never forgiven."

The pathos in the poor renegade's voice rang so sincerely that Jack was deeply touched.

" Oh yes, he is," he replied. " Why, Red Top, we 'll get you well, and I 'll fix it up—why! see here—I 'll see the President myself. I know him. What he says, goes. We 'll have you die like a good American yet."

" Then it 'll have to be now, sonny," the squaw-man said. " I reckon I 've got to the end of my rope. The Bull has done for me at last, I tell you."

" The Bull! Sitting Bull! " cried Jack. " Why, I thought he 'd skedaddled—got out of the way of the fighting? "

"So he did, when he left you," the squaw-man replied. "But when the Strong Hearts saw that your major up on the bluffs was scared, and that Long Hair was trapped and doomed, one of 'em went racing off to the hills and stopped the Bull, who was making tracks for safety. And when he heard the news he came riding back and said he 'd been off making medicine. Then he made a boast of how he 'd done it all, and how his medicine always came true, and the Injuns took it all down for gospel truth. Then he went raging and tearing and gallivanting 'round the place. He blackguarded me for letting you go; and when Mi-mi took my part and called him a coffee-cooler, he up and called her a Ree renegade squaw, and then—well—I hit him—just as any man would whose wife was insulted—even in the States. Then the Bull yanks out his knife and slung it at me—same as he did at you that day—you remember. But I was n't as spry as you; I could n't dodge it. But Mi-mi—she was spryer. She saw the knife a-coming and sprang in between to save me—me—the deserter—but her husband! Well, the knife struck her—and there she lies out yonder."

Jack was actually crying.

"Poor Mi-mi," he said. "Was n't she noble, though?"

"Noble!" cried the squaw-man, adoration sending the blood surging to every vein and creating a

momentary strength. He lifted himself almost upright. "Say, sonny! what was that in the Bible—I learned it when I was a little shaver going to Sunday-school out East—something about not going back on your friends, but loving 'em if it killed you? What is it, boy?"

Jack was a good Bible scholar. In an instant the text the squaw-man sought came to his memory.

"'Greater love hath no man than this,' the boy quoted, solemnly, 'that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"

"Or a woman either, sonny—and a squaw at that—hey? don't the Bible mean that, too?" the renegade cried, excitedly. "'Cause no man—nor woman either—could show greater love than my Mi-mi did. She just laid down her life for me. And there she is, under that cottonwood."

"But how did you get hurt, Red Top?" asked Jack, as the renegade sank exhausted again. "Did you have it out with Sitting Bull?"

"Did I? They just had to hold me back, or I 'd have torn him to pieces," said Po-to-sha-sha. "And then they drove me out of camp for threatening the medicine chief, whose medicine had warmed their hearts and made them so brave that they had wiped the Long-Swords from the earth, as the chief had promised they should. No, I was in the minority, sonny, so I wandered out here

while they were raising Cain in the lodges over their victory. I made that bed for Mi-mi and laid her down in it and covered her up, and then—well—I was so lonely and homesick and down in the mouth that I did n't want to live any longer. And I won't."

Jack Huntingdon caught the renegade's hand.

"Po-to-sha-sha!" he cried, "you did n't——?"

"Yes, I did, sonny," the renegade answered, with a sad smile. "What had I left to live for, anyhow? No country, no flag, no home, no wife. Every one against me—even the Injuns—no place on earth that wanted me. So I says, 'I 'll go to Mi-mi.' I had my revolver—two charges in it—now there is one—and here I am."

"But you sha'n't die; you must n't," cried Jack, bending over the suicide. "See, I 'll get you to the doctor. Then, if you must go, you can die under the flag."

"Sonny,"—the renegade roused himself again—"just feel inside my shirt, will you?"

Jack slipped his hand within the renegade's agency shirt, and drew from it, where it had covered his heart, shot through and dyed with the suicide's blood, a small American flag.

"I swiped it at a trader's store one day," the renegade confessed. "And no one 's ever seen it—not even Mi-mi. Whenever there was a fight, I put it there. Put it above me, will you, sonny,

when—when you 're through with me, and let me feel that I 'm an American after all, bad as I 've been. Don't you ever be led away from the flag, boy," he said, solemnly. "When you lose that, you lose your country, and that means home and everything. Hold it up, will you, sonny, where I can see it once more and give the salute to the colors."

Jack, thinking to humor him, stood up just outside the wicky-up, and held the cheap little blood-stained flag aloft.

The squaw-man raised himself also, with his full brief store of fading strength, lifted his hand to his head in soldierly salute, stood fairly erect for an instant, and shouted, "Hurrah for the red, white, and blue!"

Then the momentary strength gave way, the life-blood, started afresh by this over-exertion, gushed out in fatal profusion, the wounded form grew limp and lifeless, and Po-to-sha-sha fell to the ground before Jack could spring to his assistance.

The eyes opened once in recognition; closed again; a sigh came through the parted lips; then the name —"Mi-mi."

Thus died Po-to-sha-sha, the squaw-man, the unknown deserter, the renegade—faithful at the last to the flag he had followed in his strength, and to the wife he had loved in his exile. And Jack Huntingdon was left alone.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW COMANCHE CAME INTO CAMP.

JACK turned sadly away from the spot in which lay his friend the renegade. After that day's crowding experience the light-hearted lad could never more be unfamiliar with death. The Valley of the Little Big Horn had indeed been to him a veritable valley of death.

He found the troopers still at their sad yet brotherly task; but he managed to get the trumpeter apart so that he might tell him what he wished. Briefly he recited Po-to-sha-sha's story and told of the repentant renegade's last wish.

"Wore the flag next to his heart, did he?" said the trumpeter. "Well, by George! such a deserter as that is worth forgiving. I reckon he got more punishment than the service could ever have given him. And turned Injun, too! Well, Jack, drive ahead. You can count me in on this. I reckon we can respect his last wishes, even if he did turn redskin."

And so it came to pass that Red Top the renegade had Christian burial. For Jack and the trumpeter

dug a grave for the squaw-man beside that of his faithful Indian wife; over it they planted the stars and stripes, and above it, when all was over, the trumpeter played taps, and Po-to-sha-sha the deserter slept in a soldier's grave.

Jack rode back to the camp in the upper valley that night feeling that, on that day indeed, he had "supped full of horrors." But "out of sight" is very soon "out of mind" with a healthy, happy-go-lucky boy, even if he be strong enough of character and stout enough of heart to never forget, though he may soon stop thinking, about the sights and scenes of so memorable a season as that disastrous campaign of the Little Big Horn in 1876.

Jack found plenty of things to divert his thoughts as he joined the camp; but that night, after mess, as the men sat around the bivouac fire smoking and discussing the events that have now become historic in that fatal incident of Custer's last rally, he found himself listening intently as the troopers talked the matter over and freely gave their opinion for or against the General's conduct, and the apparently needless slaughter of more than two hundred gallant men.

Opinions were widely divided. Some declared that the movement was all wrong from the start.

"The General ought n't to have divided up," said one critic. "If he 'd kept the command to-

gether and gone in with us all in a bunch he 'd 'a' licked 'em, sure as shootin'!"

"That 's so," chimed in another; "that 's just the way it came out over yonder"—he jerked his head in the direction of that fatal field still known as Custer's Hill. "Did n't you see how they lay around there in three or four little piles? They were too much divided. I tell you, there 's nothing an Injun 's so afraid of as massing. He likes to get the outfit separated and go for each part."

"I don't see that," said a corporal, long in the Seventh; "that 's just the way the General did the thing before, and it never failed till now. If he could have got at 'em early enough, I know it would have been all right, but you see we were a little too late in the day to give them the surprise-party we reckoned on."

"Anyway," said one of the self-constituted critics, "the General was too fresh. He was rash, I say—mighty rash. Why did n't he back out when he saw what he 'd got to handle, and wait for the rest of us to come up? I don't suppose he thought he was going to fight all the Injuns in Christendom. Ten to one is bigger odds than even Custer ought to face. Seems to me he should have known that and pulled back in time."

"They do say," observed another of the critics—one who counted himself well posted on the news

of the day—" they do say that the General and old man Grant had a set-to over somethin' or other, down to Washington, and that the President give it to the General hot and heavy. That set him up to make a record for himself out here in the Injun country, and he was just bound to go in and win—the bigger the victory with the smallest outfit, so much the better. And that 's how comes it he 's layin' out there where he is, and two hundred good fellows alongside of him, instead of legging it after the Injuns with us at his heels. Sounds kind of likely now, does n't it ?"

" No, sir, I 'll be hanged if it does," exclaimed Jack's friend, the trumpeter. " Say, did you see who was out there on that field ? There was the General, and Cap'n Tom, his brother, and Mr. Boston Custer, his other brother, and Cap'n Calhoun, his brother-in-law, and that young Autie Reed, his nephew, to say nothing of those officers who were his closest friends, Keogh and Yates and Cook. Does it stan' to reason that the General would 'a' gone in, selfish-like and just out o' spite, and used up his whole family and his friends, only to make a show ? No, sir, it don't. You fellows know such a lot, you make me just sick with your ideas."

But the critics were not silenced by this outburst.

" Well, p'r'aps that ain't so," was the response

from one of the most pronounced of them; "but I tell you, the General's tactics were wrong. Why did n't he go slow when he struck that trail that brought us over here? How do we know that he followed orders in hurrying up his fight? General Terry 's got a cool head, and just as like as not he told Custer to hold on and wait for him and Gibbon's column as soon as he 'd struck the trail."

"Lot you know," said the trumpeter. "Why, I was right by the General's horse ready to sound the advance when General Terry was bidding him good-bye—up there on the Rosebud, you know. And General Terry said to him—I heard him—says he, 'Use your own judgment, Custer; if you do strike a big trail, just you do what you think best.' All he cautioned him was to hold on to his wounded. 'Whatever you do, Custer,' he says, 'hold on to your wounded.' I heard him say that."

"Well, he held on to 'em, sure enough, did n't he?" remarked one of the troopers. "I reckon none of 'em got away. They were all there."

"Right you are, Jimmy," responded a chorus of comrades, and one remarked, "Say, boys, did you see old Butler—sergeant of Cap'n Tom Custer's troop? Did you see where he was? I tell you, he put in his best licks 'fore he threw up the sponge. There he lay, all by his lonesome, down toward the ford, and I 'll bet I picked up a pint o' empty ca't-

ridge shells under him. How he must have laid them Injuns out! He was always a rattling good shot, the sergeant was."

"Empty shells!" growled another trooper. "H'm! that don't say much. I tell you, boys, it was the ca'tridges that whipped us. Nine out of ten of them were defective. They were dirty, and they corroded the ejectors so 's you could n't get the empty shells out of the chambers without using your knife to pick 'em out. That 's what ailed our guns t' other day. And I tell you it just killed the General's men. How much you going to do when you 've got to stop between shots to dig the shells out 'n the ejectors—'specially when the Injuns have got better and newer guns than you have? And where did they get them? At the agencies. Government guns, too. What do you say to that? I call it manslaughter, I do. What *re*-dress have poor chaps like us got when the government sends us out here to lick the Injuns, and then turns round and sells the Injuns guns to kill us with—better guns than ours, too?"

"It 's all dirty politics and favoritism and lettin' the Injun agents have a chance to make some money, no matter who 's hurt, that does that business," remarked an indignant comrade. "And we get the worst end of the shoddy contracts and the no-account guns—and that does our business."

Whereupon the discussion drifted off into a general arraignment of all in authority over them, as is always the case with all subordinates in warlike or peaceful surroundings, and always has been the case since ever the first man in the world hired another to serve him. Grumbling is the subordinate's privilege, even if it is not his prerogative.

But even criticism and grumbling must end in time, and good humor return, as it did in this case around the glimmering bivouac fires on the bluffs of the Little Big Horn. For, notwithstanding the sombre nature of their surroundings, their duties of that ghastly day—the same duties for which they would be detailed on the morrow—the troopers must have their relaxation as certainly as their fault-finding. So before long—before taps were sounded and the weary troopers tumbled into bed—they were all skylarking about their quarters; or, dropping into an absurd step, paraded about the fire, singing that good-humored travesty upon themselves just then a favorite in New York music-halls:

"There was Sargeant John McCafferty and Capt'n Donahue,
They made us march and toe the mark in gallant Company Q.
Oh, the drums did roll, upon me sowl, and this is the way we go:
Forty miles a day on beans and hay, in the regular army, O!"

You can't long keep soldiers or sailors in a sombre mood, even though death lies behind them, before them, or all about them! They say there

was joking in the ranks even when the six hundred of the Light Brigade—" all that was left of them " —rode out of the death-trap at Balaclava! Dewey's men went skylarking to breakfast in the lull of Manila's fight, and Hobson's comrades put up a bit of " funning " as they rowed into the Spanish clutches at Santiago.

But the trumpeter said to Jack, " It makes me sick, Jack, so it does, to hear those freshies from St. Paul—why, they joined the command after you did, Jack—giving their opinion over the General's tactics, and what he ought to have done! A battle had to come, did n't it ? That 's what we 're here for. If the General had n't come here, but had struck south to find Crook, or had waited for Terry, why, the Injuns would n't have hung around till he picked out the time to lick 'em. They 'd have just up and got. That 's their way. If they 'd done so, who 'd have got the blame ? Custer. He came here; he found 'em; he sailed in to whip 'em. He struck the whole Sioux nation, and got the worst of it. Well, what of it ? Is n't it better to stand up and take your medicine like a man, even if it does kill you, than hold back and be afraid to stick your nose out for fear some one 'll pull it ? General Custer died like a hero; and so did his men; and this country 'll never forget 'em, you mark my words."

From all of which Jack Huntingdon was led to infer that the trumpeter thought more of Custer's dash than of Reno's timidity—although no names were mentioned, for the trumpeter was too good a soldier to go against the rules of discipline. And still the never-answered questions stayed with both of them: "Why did not Benteen go with those packs? Why did n't Reno go, too?"

Next day the work of clearing and temporarily marking the battle-field that was a burying-ground was concluded, and at once preparations began for a speedy withdrawal. For General Terry, who was, like Reno, no seasoned Indian-fighter, felt himself on dangerous and uncertain ground, and decided to fall back at once to the supply-camp on the Yellowstone. He had no inclination to go off "playing tag" with the whole Sioux nation, and wisely deemed discretion the better part of valor. His column, as well as that of General Crook, had been defeated by the well-generalled and warlike Sioux. He wanted reinforcements before he advanced.

So preparations for withdrawal were made. But in the afternoon of the day before departure Jack accompanied a detail sent to make one last survey of the two hundred and sixty graves on and about Custer's Hill. And as they waited there Jack sought once more the twin graves under the cottonwoods, and said a boyish adieu to the good Mi-mi,

who had made him the corn-dumplings, and the odd squaw-man who had been his friend in time of need. The rent flag still fluttered above the renegade's last resting-place, and Jack with a sigh turned away, going, as he knew, to that civilization which this poor exile longed for, yet would not seek because of his faithfulness to her who had been faithful to him. As he left, Jack somehow found himself saying over and over a scrap that he had heard somewhere, but which he could neither place nor patch out—" in their deaths they were not divided."

" It suits them, anyhow," he declared, " whoever said it."

The dusk was closing in upon the bleak and bluff-like cliffs, the scarred and scarped heights that rampart the fair and now fertile valley of the Little Big Horn, as the detail rode campward across the valley. They were to ascend by the ravine-like cooley up which Reno's men had scrambled in their panic-like flight; but, from their trail, the sharp ridges of the bluffs, touched with the twilight, stood dim and ghostly in the dusk.

As Jack looked his last upon the ridge along which Custer's men had galloped to their death, and where he had taken the long leap that gave him life, he caught every now and then a glimpse of a moving form outlined on the edge of the bluff.

At last he pointed it out to his friend the trumpeter.

"It looks like a riderless horse," he said. "But, of course, it can't be."

"The ghost of Custer's troop, I reckon," the trumpeter said, half in fun and half in fear. For superstition touches more people in this world than we are ready to admit. "Looks that way, don't it, Jack? though, of course, that 's all foolishness. Hark! hear that! By George! it is a horse—or the ghost of the troop."

They all started as, down from the bluff, came the quavering notes of a neigh.

"The last call of the outpost!" the trumpeter declared, and the whole detail breathed a bit easier as they toiled up the ascent and at last dismounted beside the newly lighted bivouac fire.

But, even as they flung themselves down at mess, once again that quavering neigh of the ghostly troop-horse fell upon their ears, and in the distance sounded the approaching tramp of a war-horse.

More than one man started to his feet, while the detail that had seen the phantom charger on the bluffs looked at each other in query.

"It 's the ghost of the troop-horse, Jack," the trumpeter declared. "I wonder is it a warning—or what?"

The trampling sounded nearer; another neigh, quavering, pitiful, almost appealing in its tones, as if begging companionship or welcome, came to

their ears, and then, past the challenging outposts and the startled sentries, the ghost of the troop-horse came within the lines, and stood trembling before the bivouac fire.

"It 's one of ours!" cried Captain McDougall, who stood by. "Stir up that fire, Jack, won't you? Let 's see if we know it."

The flare shot up, and in its light the newcomer stood revealed. Bleeding from severe wounds, weak and weary, and with a desire for pity and comfort that was deeply pathetic shining in his eyes, the scarred but beautiful sorrel laid its head against the captain's shoulder as if to claim protection.

Jack sprang forward.

"Why! it 's Comanche!" he said.

"You 're right, Jack. By Jove! it is," cried the captain, flinging his arms about the neck of the sorrel. "Poor Myles Keogh! It 's his Comanche. And I believe, boys, he 's the only living thing we shall ever see from our side of that battle-field. Let 's give him a rousing welcome, boys. Come! three cheers for Comanche!"

And about the bivouac fire the cheers of welcome rang out so lustily that, from all the camp, came officers and men anxious to know the cause and to join again in a salvo of welcome to the noble charger Comanche, sole survivor of the fight, gallant Captain Keogh's splendid Kentucky sorrel.

COMANCHE, SOLE SURVIVOR. *Page 296.*

And from that day to the day of his death, Comanche, the sorrel, lived the pet of the Seventh. From the Secretary of War came the order to honor and respect him. Never a stroke of work did Comanche do; never a man crossed his back to ride him in battle or on parade; for his care and comfort one man was always detailed. And so the beautiful sorrel lived out his days, the pride of the fighting Seventh—the only living relic of Custer's last rally.

Next day the shattered command took the backward way, retiring to the supply-camp on the Yellowstone. There Terry was heavily reinforced. Men were hurried also to the strengthening of Crook at the south; and the two commands, uniting in August, 1876, entered upon the protracted search for the Sioux that ended, not in capture, as hoped, but only when Crazy Horse disappeared in the fastnesses of the Dakota Mountains, and Sitting Bull had escaped across the border into British possessions. Once again had the Master of the Strong Hearts proved himself a match for the Long-Swords, against whom he still made bad medicine.

In the end, however, the white man of course triumphed. It was not, in the nature of things, possible for the starving and divided hostiles long to resist the marshalled forces of the United States.

Colonel Miles and Colonel Merritt, both of whom,

as general of the army and commander of the Manila expedition, were later to win renown in the war with Spain, pursued the Sioux with energy and determination; the union of the separated Indian bands was prevented and when Lame Deer, the Minniconjou chief, with the last of the resisting hostiles, was surprised and routed on the Rosebud in May, 1877, Crazy Horse, the valiant Ogallala, driven to surrender himself, ran "amuck" on his way to the guard-house at Camp Robinson, and died as a true hostile wished to die—defying the white man.

Three years later, in July, 1881, Sitting Bull himself, pining for his loved home land, crossed the border and, at Standing Rock, surrendered with all his following.

The greatest of all the Sioux wars was over. The prowess of the Long-Swords had overcome the skill, as it had broken the spirit, of the medicine chief, and Custer was avenged.

As for Jack, long before the ending of that summer campaign of 1876, he was speeding to the eastward toward civilization and home.

His own "campaign" had not been a success; and yet, in its way, it had been a more surprising success than even his wildest fancy imagined. For he had taken part in the most famous of Indian campaigns, and had a share in the most notable tragedy of all our Indian warfare.

CHAPTER XXII.

AFTER MANY YEARS.

IT was one day, years after these recorded events of 1876, that Jack Huntingdon—Mr. John Huntingdon now, if you please, Consulting Architect,—sat in his office deep in a problem as to how to satisfy the demands of all the members of a certain church building committee, and yet erect the edifice he himself had determined upon, when his office boy brought in a card.

"Gentleman 's waiting, sir," he said. "Shall I show him in?"

Jack—it 's no use! I must call him Jack, still—read the card and tugged at his big brown mustache thoughtfully.

"Dr. John Young Wolf," he read. "I don't know any Dr. Wolf. Did he say what he wanted, Tony?"

"No, sir; he said just a personal call," the boy replied.

"Oh, not on business, eh?" cried Jack. "Why, of course, show the gentleman right in, Tony."

The next instant Tony was ushering in the visitor with the words, "This is Mr. Huntingdon, sir."

"So it is; of course it is," the visitor replied, as the office boy closed the door. "And he does not know me. How! heap good!" he cried, grasping Jack's half-extended hand.

Jack started at the evident Indianism—if one may so express it;—but even then his wits did not come back from wool-gathering sufficiently to grasp the personality of his visitor.

"You wished to see me, personally, Dr. Wolf?" he asked, courteously, but with an unsatisfied query in his tone.

"Yes, I did. More than you wished to see me the last time I saw you," the mysterious Dr. Wolf replied. "Let me jog your memory: a narrow, steep ravine—cooley, the frontiersmen call it; a long line of Indians stealthily pulling up on the war-path; a boy on a pony, taking a long swift leap from capture; a boy down the cooley, looking up in surprise and admiration and giving that other boy a new name: We-cha-sa Chis-chi-na—Little Man, that means. That is the last time I saw you, ten—twelve—fifteen—twenty years ago."

And the dark-faced, foreign-looking, black-haired gentleman bowed profoundly and smiled courteously.

But Jack Huntingdon was closing in on him joyously.

"Why!" he cried, "it 's not you, surely? It 's not——"

"Young Wolf, the Uncapapa, at your service, Big Tooth," the visitor replied, finishing Jack's halting query.

Jack held off the Indian at arm's length, looked him all over critically, then turned to the card, picked it up, read and re-read it, and shaking his visitor's hands most heartily, laughed quite as heartily.

"Why, certainly," he cried. "Now I understand the card, all but the Doctor—and the John. Where did you get the John, Young Wolf?"

"From you, my friend. You gave it to me," he replied, smiling.

"I gave it to you? When? I don't remember," said puzzled Jack.

"Here, sir; here in this very city—in this big village by the great salt water," Young Wolf replied—for our Young Wolf it certainly was. "The boys with bad hearts had driven me to the torture-post, when you rescued me and said,—I can hear you just now—'Johnnie,' you said, 'let 's have your tomahawk!' And Johnnie you called me till you learned my Indian name. And that is where *my* John came from—from my blood-brother, Big Tooth—afterward called Little Man, because of his courage at a certain wonderful leap."

" Well, well, Young Wolf, but I am glad to see you," cried Jack, again shaking his old friend's hands. " Sit down and give an account of yourself. Or no—somebody 'll come in and spoil our talk with business. Come around to the club with me. We 'll talk and lunch and talk again, and get all the news of the past twenty years. Well, well! but I am glad to see you."

And throwing on his coat and hat, Jack dragged Young Wolf from the office, crying out to his office boy as he went, " Be back day after to-morrow, Tony," and so into the street and off to a cozy corner at the club.

Young Wolf laughed heartily, permitting himself to be led away an unresisting captive.

" The same old Big Tooth—impulsive as ever, I see," he said, as he sank down into the great easy-chair that Jack wheeled out for him, *vis-à-vis* to its companion chair in which Jack at once installed himself.

" Say! how under the sun did you find me, Young Wolf — excuse me, Doctor John Young Wolf ? " demanded Jack. " I just happened to think you never knew my name—my common, every-day, New York name, I mean ? How did you know it ? You could n't find Big Tooth or Little Man in the directory."

" I 've been on your trail for years," the Indian

replied. "Three times I have been in New York on my way to and from Europe, and each time I have looked in vain. But this morning—not half an hour ago—I stood at my hotel window, and saw you come down the street with three gentlemen——"

"My building committee. I 'd just had a *séance* with them," murmured Jack.

"I followed you—tracked you—excuse me for it—trailed you up to your office," said the Indian. "I read the name on your door—entered—presented my card—and behold! here we are—with the years pushed away, talking as we did under the cottonwoods beneath the Devil's Tower."

"That 's so," said Jack; "it seems only yesterday. But lots of things have happened in those twenty years. You—a doctor, a——"

"A gentleman? An American? Yes, I trust so, my brother," the Indian replied, supplying Jack's unexpressed wonderment. "Perhaps to you my story is more interesting than your own, though I doubt it. I will tell it, briefly. I was a wild Indian across the border until the Sioux surrendered and went back to the agency the year after Custer's fight. There I met a good man who became interested in me, and at last prevailed on Chief Gall, my uncle, you remember, to let me go to Hampton. I went. General Armstrong made me over.

All that I am to-day I owe to him, God bless him!"

"Great man," said Jack, who, like far too many Americans, only had a vague idea as to General Armstrong and what he really had done for the bettering of the "wards of the nation." He did know, however, in a general way that the devoted soldier-teacher had accomplished some wonderful things with the Indians—and when he looked at Young Wolf he was sure of it.

"After I finished at Hampton, I went back to the reservation," continued the Indian. "I wanted to be somebody—to amount to something; but oh! my brother, it is hard, so hard, for an Indian to keep from drifting back into savagery, unless he can have help. I did not have very much at the agency. I dropped—once—twice—stood the sun-dance torture—caught the Messiah craze and the ghost-dance fever, recovered myself—became a scout—then one of the Indian police—and was in at the death of Sitting Bull."

"No! Is that so?" cried Jack. "I remember reading about the end of the old fox. Killed, was n't he—resisting arrest?"

"Yes, and it was very nearly the end of Young Wolf, too," the Indian replied.

"Tell me about it—how did my old chief, the Master of the Strong Hearts, die?—game?"

"Yes, from his standpoint, he certainly did," Young Wolf replied. "He was Sitting Bull to the last. I was one of the company of Indian police, established by the government, in the Grand River station. Henry Bull-Head was our lieutenant. I was fast getting back to civilization then, but it was hard—so hard, Big Tooth—pardon me, Mr. Huntingdon."

"No, no; that 's all right," said Jack. "Call me by the old name. See, I 'm Big Tooth still," and lifting his heavy mustache, Jack displayed the same prominent front teeth.

Young Wolf laughed heartily. "Just the same, just the same," he said. "Well, we knew from his actions that Sitting Bull was getting ready to leave the reservation. He had fitted his horses for a long, hard ride, and that meant that he intended to break out and raise the Sioux in another rebellion. Henry Bull-Head sent me off to warn the commandant at Fort Yates, forty miles away. I rode hard, and the soldiers were soon out, concentrating at Oak Creek, eighteen or twenty miles from Sitting Bull's tepee—no, his house. He was living in a real house then. The captain hurried me back to tell Henry Bull-Head to hold the old chief until the soldiers could reach him, but it was hard work. Sitting Bull had stirred up his followers—Strong Hearts, most of them, you know. They resisted us

and gave us a hard fight. We had arrested him as ordered, but he called on his Strong Hearts to rescue him, and the shots began to fly. Lieutenant Henry Bull-Head was standing at the old chief's side. 'Shoot him!' cried Sitting Bull, and Catch-the-Bear, one of the Strong Hearts, fired at him. But Bull-Head was on his guard, and though Catch-the-Bear's shot struck him, he turned at once and fired straight at Sitting Bull. The old chief gave a cry, just one—you know it: 'Sha-te su-ta! I am a Strong Heart!' and then he and Henry Bull-Head fell dead together. In an instant my gun was up. I fired and shot Catch-the-Bear to save my lieutenant. But it was too late. Catch-the-Bear fell dead, across his chief, but Henry Bull-Head was dead too. Then the fight became general. I was struck down, and knew nothing more until the soldiers had shelled and captured the house and all the Strong Hearts that were left alive. And that was the end of Sitting Bull. The Master of the Strong Hearts died as he lived, an uncompromising hostile."

"Jingoes! but that was a stirring time," exclaimed Jack Huntingdon, deeply interested in his friend's story. "And that 's the way the old chief died? Well, he 's hunting the white buffalo now, I suppose—he and Gall together, perhaps. The big chief, your uncle, is dead too, I believe, is n't he, Young Wolf?"

" Yes, he died while I was in Europe," the Indian replied. " He and Sitting Bull are buried near to each other at Standing Rock agency. It 's the only way, I reckon, in which they could be together in peace. They were always at odds, and, as you know, Big Tooth, they were exact opposites. My Uncle Gall—or Co-ka-bi-ya-ya, as he preferred to be called—was as frank as Sitting Bull was crafty, as brave as the Bull was treacherous, and as noble-minded as the Bull was vain. When he once surrendered his independence, Gall was true to his promises to the Great Father. But the Bull was a plotter, restless under restraint, and forever seeking to stir his Strong Hearts against the government. And that is why he died. They tell me his grave at Standing Rock is shunned by all—even by the chief's own Strong Hearts, who fear his medicine and spells, even though he is gone."

" Just as Po-to-sha-sha did," said Jack, recalling the squaw-man's last request. " Poor Po-to-sha-sha!"

" They always told me that Red Top was killed in the Greasy Grass battle—I suppose I should call it the Little Big Horn," Young Wolf said. " But I never knew. I wonder if he ever went back to his own white race."

Jack mused a bit. He had held loyally to his promise to Po-to-sha-sha. But now Sitting Bull

was dead. Chief and follower had alike gone over the river and were, in the Indian belief, hunting the white buffalo together on the endless plains. Even conscientious Jack felt that the seal of secrecy was removed, and he told his Indian friend the story of the renegade's life and death.

Young Wolf heard it all in silence. Then he said: "Well, Po-to-sha-sha was a brave man after all. And I always thought him a coward. I 'm glad to know it, Big Tooth, and from your lips, for I 've come home to marry Po-to-sha-sha's daughter."

"What! that baby!" Jack exclaimed.

The Indian laughed.

"Hardly a baby now, after all these years," he retorted.

"But I always supposed she was dead," said Jack. "Po-to-sha-sha did not mention her."

"He did n't know about her," Young Wolf explained. "When the fight commenced, that baby was in Mi-mi's mother's tepee, and in the confusion and flight, her grandmother carried her off on the northern trail. Nothing was ever heard of her father; although it was said that Sitting Bull's curse had shrivelled him to dust. But the girl was brought up by her grandmother until the tribe got back to the reservation. Then the same good man who sent me to Hampton sent Annie to Carlisle. We call her Annie, after the wife of her benefactor.

Annie Reed Tope is her name now—not a bad paraphrase of Red Top, is it?—and she has most beautiful wine-colored hair," Young Wolf asserted, with a smile.

"Say, that 's great. Invite me to the wedding, won't you, Young Wolf?" cried Jack. "I 'll go —if it 's to Bismarck! I really think, as the executor of the head of the family, I ought to give the bride away."

And Young Wolf declared that he should.

"But how did you come to be this?" demanded Jack, pointing inquiringly at Young Wolf's card.

"Why," replied the Indian, "the surgeon at Fort Yates, where I was taken after the fight, when Sitting Bull was killed, became interested in me, especially after he knew that I was a Hampton graduate, struggling against my own environments. He had a friend in St. Louis who was ready to be helpful to his fellows, and, at the doctor's suggestion, my new St. Louis benefactor sent me to a medical college in Chicago, and after my graduation sent me abroad to 'walk the hospitals' at Paris and Vienna. So, you see, I 'm a full-fledged 'sawbones' now, and I 'm going to practise at St. Louis. I 'm to be married next month, at my friend's big house in St. Louis. Annie has been living there while I have been abroad, and the future looks very rosy for us."

"Well, after all, then, Sitting Bull brought you luck, Young Wolf," declared Jack. "For, if it had n't been for him, you would n't have been wounded, gone to Fort Yates, found your St. Louis friend, gone abroad, or married Miss Annie. It 's an ill wind that blows no one any good. Sitting Bull's loss is your gain, eh, Young Wolf?"

"It was a chain of circumstances, my brother," said the Indian, with a smile; "and I 'm not sure but Big Tooth and Chief Long Hair are links in the chain. Poor Long Hair! That was a needless sacrifice of a brave man," the doctor added.

"You 're right, Young Wolf," Jack assented, nodding regretfully. "That 's just what it was—of two hundred and more brave men—and Autie Reed."

"And yet, after all, my friend," said Young Wolf, reflectively, "I 've grown to be quite a believer in the theory of one of the English poets—Pope, I think—who said, 'Whatever is, is right.' The sacrifice of a brave man like Custer and of his gallant command was necessary for many reasons. Did you ever see the poem that Longfellow wrote about it—the one he called 'The Revenge of Rain-in-the-Face'?"

"I should say I did," said Jack. "I ran right up against that big boaster, Rain-in-the-Face, at the World's Fair, and I bought one of those poems

with his autograph. Gracious! how it did bring back old times to see him there! I wanted to have a big talk with him; but I was in a hurry—I always am, seems to me—and there was a crowd, so I had to give it up. But say, Young Wolf, imagine that old fire-eater writing his name. He did it mechanically, though. He did n't know what it meant at all."

"I suppose not," the Indian remarked. "Big Rain hardly had the making of a scholar in him."

"But say! that poem 's all off, is n't it?" said Jack. "I could have given Mr. Longfellow points. He made Sitting Bull a fighting leader—which he was n't. He put you chaps in ambush—which you were not. He made the fight in the ravine—which it was n't. And he made Rain-in-the-Face kill Custer—which he did n't. And yet that 'll go down into history, and what are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing, my brother," returned Young Wolf, smiling. "Of what value or importance are dry facts in such a poem, if motive and inspiration are right. You can't spoil 'Barbara Frietchie' by such search-light criticism. You won't rob Longfellow's poem of its real strength."

"Why, say, Young Wolf!" exclaimed Jack, "you talk like a book. I wish I knew as much as you do. Do you know that poem? Recite it, won't you?"

Young Wolf looked around the quiet clubroom. "Is it permissible here?" he asked.

"Well! I guess. If I say so, it is," his friend responded, with an air of proprietorship. "Besides, this is an off-hour; nobody's around. I wish there were. Go ahead."

Then Young Wolf, in a subdued tone, but with all the strength and earnestness that could live in a regenerated scion of that race which for over four hundred years had been the dupe and prey of the white man, gave the noble lines of America's foremost poet, beginning:

"In that desolate land and lone,
Where the Big Horn and Yellowstone
Roar down their mountain path,
By their fires the Sioux chiefs
Muttered their woes and griefs,
And the menace of their wrath."

I 'm not going to give it all here. Turn to your Longfellow, and read "The Revenge of Rain-in-the-Face," and see if you can imagine for yourselves how it would be spoken by an educated and refined but deeply sensitive American Indian.

"Whose was the right and wrong?
Sing it, O funeral song,
With a voice that is full of tears;
And say that our broken faith
Wrought all this ruin and scathe
In the Year of a Hundred Years."

That is the last verse, you know.

Jack applauded noiselessly when Young Wolf had finished.

"That 's great, Doctor!" he cried, appreciatively. "Even if it 's wrong in details, it 's great. George! I can see it all now," and Jack shut his eyes and for an instant was off in that fertile death-valley where Custer made his last stand.

"It 's the closing verse that touches me, my brother," said the Indian. "'Whose was the right and wrong?' The years must decide. I am of the vanishing race. But if we vanish as a race to become real Americans, part and parcel of the greatness and glory of the great republic, even the 'ruin and scathe' that hurled my brothers and your comrades to death have not have been in vain. I am of the future; the past is forgotten. The Indian farm-lands that dot the valleys of my native West are to do more for my race than all the dreaming and all the medicine of the Master of the Strong Hearts."

"That 's so, Dr. John Young Wolf," said Jack, impressed by the broad and progressive sympathy of his friend. "And if we Americans can learn the wisdom of caution, the loyalty to duty, and the lesson of heroism that we may gather from that sad but immortal story of Custer's last rally and his ride into fame, then I don't know as he died in vain.

I 'm not sure but he would as lief be remembered for that gallant close of a gallant career as for his dashing charges in the valley with Sheridan, or as if he had lived only to drop into forgetfulness as a retired veteran, the victim of too much over-caution. After all, Young Wolf, even death has its compensations, and the memory of General George Armstrong Custer will live as long as the story of American heroism holds him as one of its brightest examples."

Then the two friends rose, and arm in arm passed out to life and its stirring duties. For both red man and white man had before them the possibilities of the brightest of futures as earnest and honored Americans.

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